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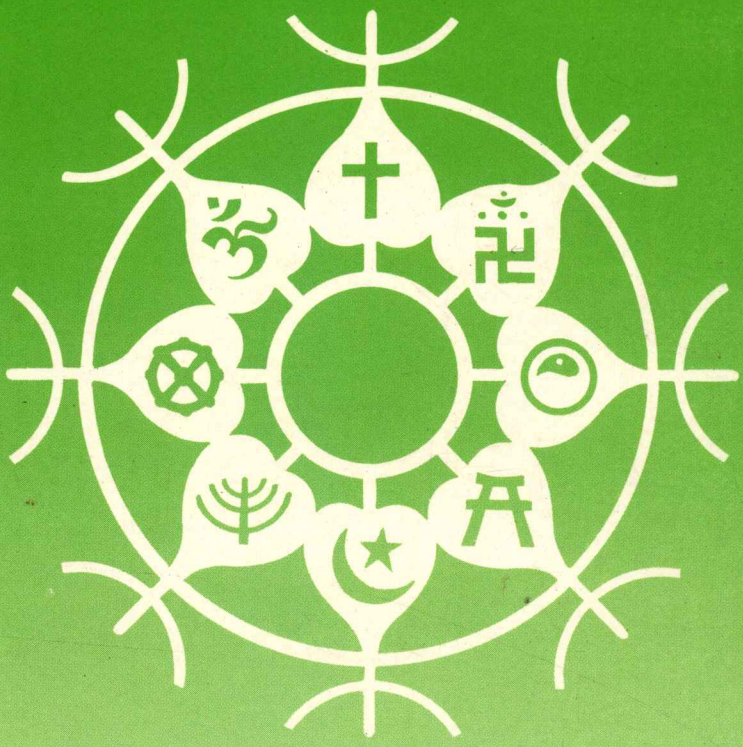

A RENEWED CALL TO INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

January-March 2002 Vol. XXVII No.1

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Editorial

A RENEWED CALL TO INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

While editing this number of Dharma on "A Renewed Call to Interreligious Dialogue" Ahmedabad where Mahatama Gandhi's Sabarmathi Ashram exists, is still witnessing the pogrom against the Muslims. The ongoing macabre death dance in the name of religion has knocked India off the moral high ground it claims with regard to religious harmony and tolerance. The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre (Sept 11, 2001), and on the Indian parliament (Dec 13, 2001), and the recent Sabarmati Express massacre (Feb 27, 2002) and the ongoing unabated slaughter of Muslims in the various parts of Gujarath have thrown a spanner into the ongoing movements of inter-religious dialogues. Ayodhya is plunging India into a searing crisis that has the potency to tore the polity at the seams in the coming years if it is not contained to the satisfaction of minorities. Against the backdrop of the ongoing communal violence in various parts of the world, the question being often raised is whether the inter-religious dialogue has reached a limit-situation. Do people now begin to lose trust in the interreligious dialogue?

In the same breath, we have to ask the pertinent question whether we have any other veritable way to contain the communal violence. Dialogues are the only sure and sane means to uproot the ethnic and religious bias deep down the collective unconscious, the source of the communal frenzy. Cleansing process has to start from the dungeon of the unconscious though it is a slow and painstaking process. This is possible only in a dialogical context. Indeed the dialogue has to go on in a more vigorous and vibrant way more than ever before because of the simple logic that there is no other alternative to face the ongoing communal hatred and violence. But interreligious dialogues have to expand their arenas and horizons so that they address wider issues and concerns which are crucial in the peace process.

Till recently interreligious dialogue has been conceived as an encounter between religions, and theological and spiritual issues have been the main concerns on the agenda. In the present scenario interreligious dialogue has to grow beyond mere religious issues into cultural and political questions. In India there is no sharp divide between sacred and secular. There is a continuum among religion, culture, politics, economy, philosophy and spirituality. Moreover, religion, besides its transcendental dimension, is also the vital referent of one's ethnic, cultural and political identity. In India, and

also in the global level, especially when people and nations are today grouped together in terms of civilization rather than ideologies, secular nature of polity cannot exclusively be interpreted in terms of a sharp divide between the sacred and the secular. It implies that religious archetypes and symbols are quite operative and vibrant at the depth of political psyche and identity. The separation between religion and politics or culture seems academic. Even in Europe religious bearing of culture and politics in increasingly asserted and upheld in the present scenario of religious fundamentalism.

What is driven home is that interreligious dialogue can offer a critical platform on which people of various political, religious and cultural allegiance can come together and interact on the common issues to build up a world community in a pluralistic frame. Here interreligious dialogue is a journeying together of various cultural and ethnic groups; here success is journey itself, not a destination. This journey is possible in a fellowship of reconciliation, a reconciliation which respects diversity. Interreligious dialogue should be able to lead the world community to a reconciled diversity, in all its spectrum of life, whether it is cultural or political, or economic, or religious. This reconciled diversity is a plurality in unity. It is a vision and experience which will help us to see the 'whole' in each 'part'. This reconciliation which respects and incorporates the plurality, every context and concern, is something to be attained consciously and earnestly through a dialogue in life. When the world community is further segmented and fragmented, and each ethnic and religious minority group is increasingly becoming inward looking on the onslaught of fundamentalism, honest efforts are to be initiated, both at the individual and collective level, to sustain the interreligious dialogue against all odds before the situation comes under the fundamentalist sweep and deteriorates itself beyond redemption. It is the time of rededication to the mission of interreligious dialogue. The articles in the present number advocate the need of situating interreligious dialogues on a wider spectrum and of addressing concerns and questions beyond religious issues. Some of the articles in this number are papers presented in the two national seminars on interreligious questions conducted at the Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram. Hope this number will help the readers to look at the phenomenon of interreligious dialogues in a new frame and urgency.

Antony Kalliath
Associate Editor

A NEW SOCIETY FOR A NEW MILLENNIUM

R. Panikkar[♦]

The genuine intrareligious dialogue is not an exercise in the clouds or merely a dialogue between experts. Religion has to do with the earth as much as with heaven. The artificial slogan about the "Third Millennium" is a good pretext to reflect on the religious contribution to a just society. The situation of the world at large confirms what we see in India: *We are going in the wrong direction.* What follows are some reflections on that ultimate question. Is this not a religious concern?

The Intrareligious Imperative

In our times, the crisis of religion cannot be overcome from one single religion, and certainly not from one single culture *The task is today urgently cross-cultural,* i.e., *interreligious,* because of the inextricable link between culture and religion.

Paraphrasing Marx I would say that it is not solely question of how to change the world or to go to heaven, but also how to love the world without ceasing to struggle to realize heaven, even on earth – without specifying now the meaning of the symbols of heaven and earth. It is a question of recovering the integral meaning of human life—and thus without severing it from the entire reality.

It is this awareness which makes us very sensitive to the state of the world today and constantly brings our reflections to the vital problems of our contemporary human predicament.[1]

A List of Priorities[2]

There is an emerging consensus that the world needs radical measures to prevent falling into the abyss itself is digging into. But when it comes to a new vision we seem to lack imagination, to say the least, and are afraid of being brand marked as utopians. I am conscious of the

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[1]the author has dealt extensively with most of the problems mentioned, but he is not alone in this endeavour.

[2]A similar list was published by the author in J. Ogilvy (ed.), *Revisioning Philosophy,* Albaby (SUNY) 1992.

utopian character of this charter and I do not elaborate now the intermediary steps or the required strategies to approach the goal. This is a communitarian task. Blueprints are out of place. I only underline that the seriousness of the hour demands the radicality of the points. Many of them overlap each other and some of them are of a more concrete character than others. Some are hierarchically related and all are mutually linked so that the change in one point depends on an effect the change of the others. Aristotle spoke of "political prudence", and I appeal to it for the implementation of the points. This is only a sort of memorandum. Needless to say that each of these points is complex, that all of them are problematic, have been largely studied and should not be oversimplified. But the urgency of the situation requires decisions in one direction without being paralysed because the experts tell us that the issues are difficult and complicated and meanwhile we leave the world to the powers that be. All the following points needs to be relativised and yet cannot be ignored.

1. Demonetizations of Culture

Christians, to begin with, like to quote that revolutionary sentence of Jesus, that we cannot serve god and Mamona. Vedantis are found of saving that the riches of this world are despicable. Buddhist monks should beg their food and be clothed in patched robes. And so many other religions voice similar ideas. But when it comes to practical life we all seem to be less radical. A Franciscan friar should not ride a horse, but he can drive a car, as this is not forbidden in the rule.

Money has an important role to play in human interactions, but it has become a *totalitarian tyrant* in modern westernized culture, east and west. I have penetrated all spheres of human action: food, health, education, well being, art, marriage, all seem to depend on money. As geometry abstracts forms from physical perceptions, elaborates on the pure forms, and eventually applies again the laws of those abstracted forms to physical realities, money abstracts from human activities, 'abstracts' (extracts) money from them, and eventually makes those very activities dependent on money. The *real* world is not made of monetizable commodities like physical entities are not made of geometrical figures fractal notwithstanding. And this is not only the case for spiritual values, but also for material realities. To have to pay for water, food and soon air is a sign of a sick culture.

The monetization of all cultural values is the natural outcome of the quantification of the human outlook. Money allows to stick a quantitative tag to any human activity and makes possible to measure that activity by its monetary coefficient. Nature is written in mathematical figures, we were told by Galileo, although now Modern Science begins to surmise that physical entities may not be measurable, not only because of a factual (heisenbergian) impossibility, but because the theoretical incommensurability of any *real* things—unless we postulate gratuitously that reality is intelligible. In fact, reality is incommensurable to any intellect. Reality is real and not only ideal. Once again intellectualism is lurking from behind the western psyche. The dictatorship of money is an outcome of a narrow 'scientific' worldwide.

2. Dismantling the Construction of the Tower of Babel.

One of the most powerful symptoms of our times is the unbridled power of the world-market in the world economy where all gods are monetizable commodities on an abstract world scale. This global homogenization centralizes the control of all goods in fewer and fewer agencies. In short, the centripetal tendency of our times is fruit of a mechanistic and quantitative conception of cultural values; Technocratic civilization kindles again the temptation of a World Empire. Technocetrism is the insidious temptation.

There is a paradox here. The material planet earth may not be the centre of the universe like the astronomic sun may not be the centre of the Milky Way. Ethnocentrism may be obsolete, and anthropocentrism a weak substitute for a lost theocentrism (which contradicts itself the moment it is interpreted by Men). Technocentrism, on the other hand, claims to be neutral (it privileges neither one race nor one culture) and objective (the centre is neither Man nor God). This is not true; but its power lies in the fact that Man needs a centre, a point of reference, a place of convergence. God has become an object of private belief. He has no cosmic role to play and possible alternatives of other worldviews seem to be on the wane or non existing.

The difficulty lies with the geometrical interpretation of file metaphor projected into mechanistic worldview. None of the mentioned things nor a purely transcendent god can be the centre of the universe. And yet, in a more holistic vision the centre of the universe lies in each hand,

every being which constitutes precisely the *uni-versum* as we should know since Anaxagoras, the Upanisad and file Middle Ages. "God is that infinite sphere whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference nowhere," said an hermetic wisdom quoted approvingly by many sages of the West. Losing this vision of the centre of reality passing through our self (because the Divine is immanent as much as transcendent) we are condemned, irresistibly than water precipitates "down the torrents of the mountains, to fall into the precipices of fashion, power, profit, and ultimately despair. We are reduced then to atoms striving for survival at the cost of others. If life has a meaning only for the victors, only for those who 'make it', we create an artificial hell for all the others, not an amount of "liberation," "Redemption", or "Reincarnation" can rescue them from it. The meaning of the life for the individual Malini cannot lie in her becoming the head of the Corporation beating the other 300 employees. The meaning of life for the people of Madagascar will not be found panting after the 'model' of a rich and powerful USA—accepting already western material standards.

Cultural pluralism means, among other things, that each culture has its own centre, elusive, mobile and contingent as it may and should be. Without that self-confidence that in every one of us befalls the centre of reality, *homo sapiens* is reduced to *animal imitants* to an aping animal.

We are the centre of the universe, because as a microcosm we reflect the whole, but we are not the circumferences of reality. We can only be a centre when we have no dimension of our own and are open to an ever greater circumference. The centre becomes selfish, isolated and ultimately stifles the moment it draws a circumference upon itself. This is the reason of the paradox that in order to decentralize culture we need more and more centered individuals and self-confident human societies. A self-reliant economy, for instance, means not self-sufficiency, but an equitable inter-independent net of markets. *Inter-independence* is not unilateral our unbalanced dependence. Interdependence without inter-independence is just dependence of the weaker in front of the powerful. The bio-regions, as a relatively complete ecosystem, may offer here an appropriate paradigm.

3. Overcoming the Nation-States Ideology

The alternative is not to fall back into absolute feudalisms of 'primitive' tribalisms. The alternative has to be elaborated by fostering in an organic way the healthy tendency, noticeable everywhere, of increasing

ontonoinies and working out a network of multilateral but not necessarily universal relationships which allow for a fruitful coexistence. I am proposing neither a single gigantic Nation-state not a proliferation of monadic and Lilliputian nation-states. Neither "people" nor "nation" means necessarily "state".

It is not a question of shifting the notion of sovereignty from nation-states to people or even cultures. To overcome state-nationalisms does not mean to transpose the same ideology of self-sovereignty and absolute freedom to bigger units or even to the entire human race. There are no sovereign on earth. The ancients had the belief in a cosmic order, ordo, rta, tao, dharma, kosmos, or an upholder of it, god. Without an homeomorphic equivalent to these symbols the delicate balance between freedom and cohesion (let alone spontaneity and oercion) is not possible. The problem is not merely political. It is philosophical and theological. Two given societies can be ontonomically related only if there is a third element co-ordinating them, only if they form part of a whole which is more than its 'parts' but which requires the well-being of the 'parts' in order to be a harmonious whole.

The Empire was a myth with a unifying force. Its demebration produced the nation states. The Empire could be sovereign because it was allegedly founded on a divine principle superior to it. Not so the nations states, but they retained the title (even against etymology there cannot be many 'supreme'). The ideology of Empire has collapse and so that of absolute sovereignty of partial units. A new myth is required.

4. Reducing Modern Science to its Proper Limits

The very grandeur of Modern Science is accountable for its unbounded success well over its proper boundaries. It has modified modern ways of thinking in areas far distant from the domain of the scientific disciplines. It has influenced ways of living in almost all corners of the world.

This reduction to its proper limits cannot be imposed from outside. The modern scientific ideology is too wide-spread so as to make ineffective any kind of heteronymous impositions of morality. It is no by legislation and artificial boundaries, for instance, how he can bridle the intrinsic expansionist force of genetic engineering. It has to be by a

discovery of the very *ontomic* order of reality. This discovery has to be fruit of an insight into the meaning of human life and the nature of reality.

The limits of Modern Science are both epistemological and ontological, besides being objective and subjective. In spite of the sacred name of *scientia* Modern Science is not identifiable with it. It is not gnosis, *jnana*, nor *hochma chi, sapientia.* It has not intrinsic saving power. Not all epistemology is 'scientific' not all cognition is measurable. Not all knowledge is covered by 'Science'. Modern Science cannot be equated with knowledge about the world or insight into the nature of reality. Not all ontology is 'scientific'. Not even all being is necessarily reducible to the logos. Not all is object, so science, and certainly the scientist as subject cannot be included in it.

5. Correcting Technocracy by Art

The direct result of modern techno-science is the technocratic complex of modern society. The old theocracies, monarchies, oligarchies, aristocracies, anarchies, and even democracies have given way today to modern technocracy. The *kratos,* the power, is not invested on god, on a special group of people, or left it apparently vacant, but on modern technology. Modern technology, like Modern Science, has borrowed a traditional word and invested it with a new meaning. 'Science' is not *scientia, jnana,* we said, not is modern technology synonymous with *techne* traditional techniques, namely, arts, crafts, machines of first degree, arrangements of material artifacts without artificiously induced accelerations. There is the spirit—as inspiration—behind every *techne.* The indic *silpsastra* offers here a model, and not only for India. The craftsman has to be inspired. Modern technology has substituted the *pneuma* by the logos in the sense of *ratio.* The 'scientist' needs information and "know-how", the artist needs inspiration and "know-what".

Today the *kratos*, power, does not lie on the politicians. They have to obey the megamachined of the technocratic System. The power does not even lied with the experts. They need capital and political blessings they can only work in an unilateral direction; increase of power, profit, acceleration, minuterization, efficiency, etc.

Unless we play demagogically with words the demos, the people, cannot have *kratos*, power, unless it is not only entitled, but also able, to

exert it. Technocracy makes it impossible for the people to steer their own destiny. The megamachine commands and its experts of long and highly specialized years of training can just manipulate it, impotent also to direct it to other directions and uses other than those allowed by the inner mechanisms of the technocratic system. Arammentism, inflation, growth of megalopolis, agriculture converted into agribusiness, etc., are all fatal laws of the System, to put just some examples.

The people can only recover its power if it can have dominion over its own destiny. Technocracy does not allow it. It would require a highly specialized know-how which is impossible for the people to master. Technocracy makes children out of adults. The people cannot even know and thus decide what is good for them. "The Computer surely knows"! "We have only to obey". Some feel that capitalism is incompatible with democracy. Technocracy is certainly contradictory to democracy. Protagoras had already seen it. While for all the other arts and crafts we can rely on qualified experts, the political art, the politike *techne,* cannot be delegated to other competent experts. (Platon, *Protagoras, 322 b sq.).* It concerns and belongs to all of us. A new anthropology is here required.

The word art needs an explanation; so much we are accustomed to take this word for entertainment, folklore, and a somewhat marginal activity. Art is that which art-iculates life and brings it all together by the 'artistic' creation of the person. The meaning of life is to make a work of art of each of us. For this artistic creation we need the collaboration of the entire universe, from the Divine to Matter, and to our fellow-beings. Each one of us should be able to express oneself, to create oneself in positive symbiosis with the rest of reality. Beauty and love are paramount in most human traditions: the first attribute of god, the First of the God...as so many religions affirm

6. Overcoming Democracy by Experiencing a New Kosmology

The demos can have *kratos,* power only if people is more than the sum-total of more or less isolated individuals. Man is a person, a knot in a new of relationships... and not an autonomous individual. Man is an *ontonomous* being. We need a new anthropology. But a new anthropology requires a new notion of tile cosmos. Concept is an inadequate word. for this reason I spell the word with *k,* literally transliterating from the original *kosmos,* which has the stupendous connotations of world, order, and

ornament. Cosmology then connotes not new 'scientific' concept of the universe (cosmology), but the experience of how the cosmos manifests itself to us, our sense of the cosmos, our perceptions of reality.

The cosmos we live in is not necessarily the astronomic, or the geological, or even the geographic, or historiographic universe. Each culture has another sense of the cosmos and lives in another cosmos. The main cause of our present-day crisis is to be found in the latent conflict of cosmologies in and around us, *in* us, because our contemporary experience of reality is ill at ease in the cosmos of a scientific vision of the world. *Around* us because the mixing of people of different worldviews cannot be peacefully handled if we compare only different texts and ignore the underlying (kosmologal) contexts.

There are many voices today singing new tunes and mixing with the old, but we do not have (yet) a new sense of the real. We bother about miracles, feelings, and extrasensory perceptions (to put some examples), because they are foreign and uncomfortable phenomenon in the overall prevalent 'scientific' cosmology, but we lack, even within each culture convincing vision of reality. Our myths are collapsing and we do not have new ones.

We know, further, enough sociology, psychology and political science to ignore that democracy offers an effective political technique, but not a strong theory. We know not only that people are manipulable, we know also that the demos as the highest instance only works within a given and accepted mythos, which makes possible certain beliefs to a particular people. The true demos, like the ancient polis, all need their temples, their gods, their opening to a super-democratic power. We can only avoid tyranny if a new cosmology emerges. The political situation of Africa and Latin America should be sufficient examples.

7. Recovering Animism

Without quarreling about words, I understand by animism the experience of life a coextensive with nature. Every natural being is a living cell, part of whole, and mirroring the whole at the same time. "Not only animals and plants are alive, also mountains and water are alive, since they give life to the creatures born form them?", Marsilio Ficino wrote in 1476 echoing an almost universal tradition (*De emore,* VI, 3).

Life is the time of being, the ancients said (*zoê chronos toū einai).* Any thing temporal is alive by the very fact of *being* temporal. Time is not only, and not even mainly a quantitative or 'scientific' parameter, it is the very life of the universe. Individual existence is such because it stands in symbiosis with the Tree of life, with the Being of beings.

The meaning of human life is therefore, to share as fully as possible the Life of the Universe. Christ came, John the Evangelists says, reporting Jesus' words, so that we may have Life and Life abundantly. Not all life is the same, to be sure, nor are our nations the same: the modern Gaia hypothesis is not the *anima mundi* of the neoplatonics the *jivatman* jaina, Tylor's African animism, or Mach's philosophical vitalism.

Two features should be here mentioned. Animism here stands for an overcoming of all mechanistic and rationalistic worldviews. There is a principle of freedom, of life in everything—as contemporary scientists seem to begin to surmise.

Animism stands, further, for the relatedness of all reality according to an order or harmony which is itself relatedness. To say all is alive is not to affirm that all is of one stuff or all alike. It affirms the moving, free, precisely living relationship of every brim of reality. It connotes, further, that death is a real possibility—for the individual.

8. Peace with the Earth

No ecological renewal of the world will ever succeed until and unless we redeem 'ecology' from being either a 'hard' science or a sentimental movement. The word *ecosophy* stands for this change. Ecosophy considers the Earth as belonging to our Body, and the body as belonging to our self. This would be an aberration if the 'belonging" were to be understood as private and individual property. Neither the Earth nor the Body nor the Self belongs to my (psychological) *ego.* We are sharers in the Word, as the Vedas say and the Gospel echos—equating the Word with Divine Life, identifying Life with Light, and Light with god. The ecosophical problem is strictly theological—and vice versa, theology cannot ignore the Earth. The name of Ramaanuja could be an inspirational figure for the cosmos as the Body of God.

The Jewish tradition reports about the Covenant of Noah. A covenant with the Earth is one of our most *urgent* and important tasks. The ecosophical movement is not technological new way of exploiting the

earth more rationally and more lastingly. It entails a relationship with the Earth altogether. The earth is not an object neither of knowledge nor of desire. The Earth is part of ourselves—of our Self.

Movements are under way to swear a human Covenant with the Earth. It is a covenant of fidelity towards ourselves. It is a question of sensitivity. It is this, which has led me to describe the split of the atom for whatever good intentions as a cosmic abortion. We kill, and extract from the very womb of matter the extra energy units which our greed needs, because we have disrupted the rhythms of Nature. We do not only torture animals and Men, if we include politics. We torture Matter as well.

Peace does not mean an idyllic or idealistic view of total passivity or the static idea Life, as if positive and negative metabolisms were not required. The animal does not 'kill' but eats and exceptionally fights. Man does not exploit the Earth when following Nature. The chain of being or the wheel of existence is a living thing. There is exchange, there is karma, there is death. But there is also resurrection.

Peace with the Earth excludes victory over the Earth submission or exploitation of the Earth to *our* exclusive needs. It requires collaboration, *synergy,* a new awareness.

9. Uncovering the Divine Dimension

Atheism, I submit, is another form of theism, although a negative one (antitheism). Polytheism, as well as monotheisms and deisms belong already to a decaying cosmology. The old controversies about reason and faith, believers and unbelievers are rapidly becoming obsolete. The divine Mystery is not pigeonholed in neat rational categories. Pure transcendence is a contradiction in terms. It destroys itself the moment it is not only formulated but simply thought. Thought becomes then the bridge to transcendence, and by this very fact transcendence is transcended-negated. Pure immanence on the other hand, becomes unnecessary. If the divine were purely immanent it would be identical with ourselves, and thus redundant—or pure monism.

To introduce the talk of the Divine implies to accept a 'factor' irreducible and yet related to ourselves; a 'factor' 'above' all our faculties (of loving, willing, knowing), and at the same time 'in' all of them. All too often 'God' has been envisaged as an x somewhat beyond the actual grasp of our faculties. This x recedes in the same measure then our knowledge

advances, or our feelings deepen, or our will increases. This god is 'strategically receding each time 'Science' advances. No wonder that most perceptive thinkers see this battle lost in advance. To cover our ignorance we do not need the Divine any longer. Pure potentiality would do.

The divine dimension is more than a plus in the aesthetical or intelligible *status quo.* It is 'more' than transcendence or immanence. The way to experience the divine can be a path of the plus or of the *mius* (transcending or descending) fullness or emptiness, but in both cases the way is not the goal and yet the goal is no-where behind or beyond the way, the divine dimension is a third dimension irreducible to but not independent from the other two and thus not an 'object' of the sense or the intellect, i.e., matter and consciousness. And yet the divine is utter meaningless without both. There is a third dimension of freedom infinitude which impregnates both matter and spirit, the sense and the intellect, the *aesthesis and the noesis* –open to what the Greek tradition called *ta mystika.* We would call it also the 'space' (akasa) in which we move and sense and think, in which we live and are.

Anthropomorphism is inadequate, and so is cosmomorphism when speaking about the Divine. And yet it is that plus and/or *minus* concerning both the experience of Man and Cosmos that opens up the very experience not of 'something Else' but of the other third dimension of the Trinitarian Whole. Reality is of cosmotheandric nature. The relation between the three dimension is non-dualistic, advaitic, Trinitarian.

It is here, at this level, where we should situate the most upsetting and terrifying problem which no charter should eschew; the problem of evil.

There is disorder, suffering, hatred in this world and on all levels. Blindness towards it or pure passivity would not do. A fight against it on the same level or with the same weapons only doubles the evil. Evil is—by definition—inexplicable. If we would explain it would explain it away. It is certainly a 'privation' but also a privation of intelligibility. Evil obliges us to experience our contingency, our incapacity of having a neat and coherent picture of reality. It opens us to the abyss of the Divine from the other side, as it were. It cures us from any superficiality and sense of self-sufficiency. It spurns us into our personal jump in Life and does not cover the risk. It is part of the Mystery.

As for the *how,* we already said that there is no blueprint, no model to imitate, no projected *telos,* to realize. If freedom is more (not less) than just the power of choice, it is the setting forth the *creatio continua* (of the Christian scholastics), the sharing in the momentariness (ksanikatva) of the real (of the Buddhists), the being with *Brahman* (of the vedantisn). This is our dignity and our responsibility.

INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AS A POLITICAL QUEST

Felix Wilfred♦

Inter-religious dialogue is today an ethical imperative. Any religious tradition which cares for the well being of the society cannot fail to realize the crucial importance of harmony and understanding among the religious groups in India. The dialogue has been taking place mainly at two levels: At the first level, which can also be called the formal level, there has been sharing and exchange in matters of doctrines, world-views and the ideals the various religious traditions propose, and the experience to which each religion leads its followers. At the second level, which can be called the *informal* level, we have the dialogue of life, by which is meant the good-will and understanding fostered in day-to-day life among the believers of various religious traditions.

While not denying the importance of the practice and theology of religions,[1] I must however, point out that they do not deal with *religious groups as units of power,* nor do they take into account the *power relationships* in wider society. Hence, I want to underscore in this contribution, the growing necessity of a politically-based dialogue among religions today in the present context of our Society.[2] Here religion is seen

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[1]The efforts made on the part of Indian Christians in the area of religious dialogue during the last few decades are very well surveyed in a doctoral dissertation, which gives also an elaborate list of documents and works on the theme: Jose Kuttianimatathil, *Practice and Theology of Inter-religious Dialogue. A Critic Study of the Indian Christian Attempts Since Vatican II,* (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 1995). For an Asian perspective. cf. Theses on Interreligious Dialogue. Document of the Theological Advisory Commission of FABC, *FABC Paper No.* 48, (Hong Kong, 1987); *Living and Working Together with Sisters and Brothers of Other Faiths in Asia An Ecumenical Consultation,* (Singapore., July 5 - 10, 1987, Joint CCA-FABC Report, Hong Kong. 1989).

[2]I am deliberately speaking of Interreligious dialogue, and not of inter-faith dialogue. The latter could subsume under it also the relationship to the so-called secular ideologies which share some of the traits of religion. For greater focusing of

primarily as a social reality in interplay with many other forces and factors making up the present context of India. There is often a lot of hesitation to bring the political question into inter-religious dialogue fearing that this would prejudice and mar the dialogue-process. I want to argue why a politically-based dialogue is not only helpful, but is really inevitable. I shall also indicate some of the dynamics of this dialogue.

Given the widely differing ways in which the word "political" is employed today, we would risk serious misunderstanding unless it is clarified what is meant by this concept in relation to inter-religious dialogue. We can understand politics as "the activity by which differing interests within a given unit of rule are conciliated by giving them a share in power proportionate to their importance to the welfare and survival of the whole community"[3]. Religious groups as social units wield power, and their actions affect positively or negatively other groups and units in society. And hence they are consciously or unconsciously, part of the political interplay. Moreover, the conflicts among religious groups and the necessity of evolving consensus indicate the importance of the political realm. Therefore, the fact of being "religious" does not force them out of the political sphere.

1. The Context of a Triple Disillusionment

Let me, in the first place, situate the necessity of a politically-based inter-religious dialogue in the contemporary context. It appears to me that in India we are living at the moment through a threefold disillusionment regarding the ideals for the shaping of our society. They concern (i) a critical questioning of the concept of nation, (ii) skepticism about the ideal of the secular (iii) the challenge to the institution of the state as provider of unity. I want to limit here only to some brief comments on these three disillusionments.

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the issue, as will be clear from the following pages, I have chosen to limit myself to the question of inter-religious dialogue.

[3]This is a definition by Bernard Crick influenced by Aristotle. Quoted in Roger Scruton, *A Dictionary of Political Thought,* (London: Pan Books, 1983) 361; cfr also Ali Ashraf L.N.Shanna, *Political Sociology. A New Grammar of Politics,* (Madras: Universities Press, 1983).1-17.

It is generally recognized that the idea of nation is an import from the West into India and to other parts of the colonial world[4]. In spite of it, there has been an indigenous shaping of this ideal in the process of our history over one and half a century. Within this rather short span, it has come to mean different things. The struggle for Independence brought to the centre-stage an understanding of nation in the context of anti-colonialisms.[5] That kind of understanding had an integrative function - though very limited one.[6] Today we are assisting at another conception of nation, whose characteristic is *exclusion: Some* people, some groups, some religions are excluded from this understanding of nation; or, least, they should fit into a narrowly defined understanding of nation in terms of *Hindutva.* Similar "religious nationalism" could be found also among the minority groups.[7] The ambiguity of the conception of nation, and consequently of its misuse, for narrow ends, caused serious disillusionment among many groups.

Secularism appeared to be another concept that could serve as a force of integration. But the misunderstanding surrounding this much-debated notion has left little room for hope in terms of unity and overcoming of divisions. Today this concept is being opposed in different quarters for different reasons, of course. Most glaring example is the diatribe against this concept by the Hindutva forces and a sizable section of the Muslim community. All kinds of explanations to say that this concept has a different connotation in India than the West, do not seem to carry any persuasive force.

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[4]On the development of nation as a concept and institution in the West, see the excellent work of E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[5]CL Bipan Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India,* (Delhi, 1979).

[6]CL G. Aloysius, *Nationalism without a Nation in India* (second impression), (Oxford University Press, 1999)

[7]For an international perspective on the issue, cf Ninan Smart, *Religion and Nationalism. The Urgency of Transnational Spirituality and Toleration,* Centre for Indian and Inter-religious Studies, (Rome, *1994); cf.* also the special issue *of Concilium 1995/6,* entitled "Religion and Nationalism", (London: SCM Press, 1995)

It is interesting to note, that, of late also some of the well-known Indian sociologists like M.N.Srinivas, T.N.Madan and Ashis Nandy have expressed themselves sceptical about this concept something which cannot but be very disturbing to people who had reposed their faith in what this concept came to represent.[8] Besides, from the perspective of integration and unity, the secular has not been able to achieve anything much. We are far from forging a model of secular unity centered on the working-class, or founded on the rights of individual citizens as the common point of reference.

It looks to me that secularism in India has been an attempt to blend the Western ideal of non-control and non-interference of religion in the public realm on the one hand, and the ideal of harmonious pluralism of various communities, specially the religious ones, with India. What has happened is that the Western component of the secularist ideal has been found not feasible and practicable, and at the same time the Indian ideal of pluralism embodied in it has been weakened and betrayed by the assertions of fundamentalist ideologies. All this has led to a general distrust about the effectiveness of the secular paradigm.[9]

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[8]See Joseph Tharamangalarn, "Indian Social Scientists and Critique of Secularism", in *Economic and Political Weekly,* (March *4, 1995*): *457-461.*

[9]In her recent work, Neera Chandhoke argues that the contemporary discussion on secularism may not take us far in confronting Hindutva and majoritarian ideology. The discourse on secularism is today conflict-ridden with mutual accusation of "pseudo-secularists". The whole book is an attempt to found minority rights on a more basic principle than on secularism. She enunciates her main thesis, when she states: "It may be preferable to approach the issue of minority rights from the vantage point of democracy and not from that of secularism or the nation-state ... Note that the principle of secularism is not self-validating, for we can justify it only when we derive it from, and validate it by reference to the antecedent moral principle of democratic equality. Consider this- secularism as equal treatment of all religions makes sense only when we refer it to the (prior) principle of equality. Correspondingly, a polity will be locally committed to treating all religious groups equally *only when it is antecedently committed to the generic principle of equality",* Neera Chandhoke, *Beyond Secularism: The Rights of Religious Minorities,* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 4

Finally, there is the attempt to find a point of unity and cohesion in a common mode of governance symbolized by the state, which was also held as the instance that dispenses justice and equity. The state was seen as the institution which overcomes narrow and parochial interests. But this has been betrayed. For the state, in the eyes of many, has become more a problem than a solution. Through its interventions and partisan politics it has caused divisions, conflicts and discord among the various communities in our society. Ever more, far-from containing violence, the state has become the originator of violence for opportunist ends. I think this is quite obvious from the quotidian experience in India. A respected statesman of India, C.Subramaniam, has given sharp expression to the disillusionment with the state when he observes, "in India, of course, unless he wields knife, or a gun, or a bomb, the citizen is treated like a dirt, his letters are not ever acknowledged, his phone calls not returned, and requests for interviews not heeded. The cult of violence could, in this sense, be said to be the consequence of the insensitivity of the state."[10]

2. The Necessity of a Politically-Based Dialogue

Against the above characterized situation, the possibility of a politically based interreligious dialogue emerges with clear relief, and assumes great importance. The religions which had been kept at bay through a policy of the secular and whose defenses now seem to be collapsing, have come to occupy the void left by them! By this, no claim is made that interreligious dialogue could substitute or make up for the general climate of disillusionment, suspicion and conflicts. The present position is ambiguous. In such a predicament, the religions are prone to clash with one another, by allowing themselves to be manipulated by vested interests.

But the present state of affairs also offers a unique opportunity for the religions to enter into a fresh dialogue among themselves. Such a dialogue can refer back to the oft-alluded Indian tradition of co-existence and tolerance among the different religious communities. However, it

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[10]Subramaniam, "The Major Issues Facing Us" in Challenges of the Twenty-first Century Conference, 1991 held in Memory of Indira Gandhi, (Wiley Eastern Limited, 1993), 287.

would be anachronistic and not feasible to sustain the plurality of our society relying on it alone. What I mean is that today it is not enough to invoke the past tradition of tolerance.[11] This is because we are in a situation in which such an ideal state of life has been marred by different kinds of external interventions. What is, therefore, required is that such a tolerance becomes a consciously accepted and politically-based reality in very intricate situation and in the midst of external interventions and provocations. We Indians have become today a "nation of suspicions"; even the most selfless and heroic acts of love and service to other human beings could, in this general climate of lack of trust, get painted as most selfish when interpreted by another suspecting group.

When the concrete situation is one in which identities in a society are defined in terms of nation, language, religion and so on, we need to seriously take into account the political import of their inter-relationships, or power-relationships. One factor which conditions this inter-relationship is the beliefs, tenets, the myths and the claims each group makes. History bears out the devastating experience when one neglects the identity of group and the beliefs and myths sustaining it. It is enough to look at the re-emergence of ethnic and religious issues after decades of their submergence in the former socialist countries.

One may, perhaps, imagine that through the ideology of "secularism" religions could be shown their place and confined to the private realm, or that the identities making up each group could be overcome in such a way that they cease to have any political significance. There are few things as unrealistic as this kind of a view. For, whether one wants it or not certain doctrinal tenets and modes of practice have serious, and often very disturbing political repercussions. These political repercussions depend upon how some of the doctrines and practices come across to other religious groups in the polity. From empirical point of view one can observe, for example, how some exclusivist trends Christian tradition regarding other religions and the practice of conversion have their political

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[11]See R. Balasubramanian (ed.), *Tolerance in Indian Culture*, Indian Council of Philosophical Research (Delhi, 1992).

consequences.[12] Another example would be the political discussions about common civil code and the Muslim personal law of *Shari'a*. The political role being played by the ideology of Hindutva, purportedly representing Hinduism, is well-known.

When such hot and complex religious issues are at the centre of the contemporary political debate, it would be naive to believe that proper solutions could be found through the state dealing with individual religious communities. Harmony, peace and understanding in society calls for a politically fruitful face-to-face dialogue among the different religious groups themselves, without mediation. It offers each religion the opportunity to clarify to itself, to review and re-think some of its tenets and practices in as much as these affect other religious communities. Besides, as a result of direct dialogue among the religions, these may enter into politically significant new social interactions.

3. Self-Critique A Must

A politically successful inter-religious dialogue would depend upon a very important factor: the readiness of the believers in various religious traditions to be self-critical. It could be conveniently evaded. In fact, the most difficult thing with the religious traditions is that they are so engrossed in projecting their noblest images and doctrines, that they very often fail to cast their eye on the chasm that divides them from the actual life and day-to-day experiences. For a politically-based inter-religious dialogue, it is of utmost importance that the religions make a realistic and genuine assessment of their actual state, and the role they play or fail to play in the contemporary situation of our society.

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[12]See M. C.Parekh, *Christian Proslytism in India: A Great and Growing Menace*, Rajkot; 1943; K.M.Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance*, London; Allen and Unwin 1958; Ziauddin Sardar- Ashis Nandy et al., *The Blinded Eye. 500 Years of Christopher Columbus*, (Goa; The Other India Press, 1993); Arthur Mayhew, *Christianity in India*, (Delhi; Gyan Publishing House, 1994); S.Arulsarny (ed.), *Communalism in India. A Challenge to Theologizing. The Statement, Papers and the Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Indian Theological Association.*, December 28-31, 1987, (Bangalore; Claretian Publication, 1998).

This self-criticism as the basis of dialogue would become more concrete with relation to certain very crucial questions that affect our life in India today, and which have serious ethical implications.

The first issue to be singled out is that of human dignity and rights. I think the self-criticism in this regard should cover two important areas. First comes the failure of religions to respond in any appreciable way to the blatant violations of human dignity and rights. Questions like religious doctrines, orthodoxy, the scrupulous observance of rituals and worship, guarding the boundaries of one's religious world, maintaining the power-system these and other concerns keep the religions and their agents enthralled in a different world with a different set of values. As a result, they hardly show any genuine interest, much less resolve, in issues of human dignity and violation of human rights.

Secondly, religions, far from being guardians of human dignity and rights, are themselves, each one in its own way, violators of human rights. This is very unfortunate. The power of religion and its symbols are such that doctrines, practices, laws and regulations which manifestly go against human dignity and rights could find their legitimation in the definitive authority of some special divine revelation and tradition. That is why much self-critique of institutionalized religions from an ethical point of view is very much required. What validity could there be in a doctrine or practice that glaringly goes against human dignity and rights? How credible is the source on which such beliefs and practices find their sanction?

Another closely related issue with serious political and ethical implications concerns the position and attitude of the various religious traditions to those discriminated against and the excluded in the Indian society. This has been in the 80's and the 90's the eye of the storm in the political crisis in the country, as evidenced by the controversies surrounding the Mandal Commission Report and the policy of reservation. It does not suffice to parade marvellous texts culled out from the sacred writings regarding the poor, the obligation of practicing equality and justice. What ultimately matters is not whether the scriptures have anything to say about the poor and the issue of justice, but what *concrete options* a particular religious community takes, and in which direction it moves supporting the elite and the powerful, or taking up the cause of the least

and the last. This is a serious ethical point of painful self-critique for all the religious traditions.

Finally, a self-critique is required regarding the self-understanding of a religious group as a community.[13] We can observe in almost all religions a two-fold strands: the particularist trend which underlines what singles out a religious community from others, and the universalist trend which reaches out to other communities and groups. Critical external circumstances can lead a religious group to underline its particularist dimension almost the oblivion of the other aspects. Such is the situation which the Indian society is going through. The conditions are such that the religious groups are taking an isolationist position and getting consolidated in it. It is at this critical juncture that every religious group has to make a self-examination of its image as a community in the light of the universalist trends found in its own tradition.

4. The Role of Critical Theology

Here I see the paramount importance of critical theologies within each religious tradition. A critical theology emerging from within will be the most appropriate means to challenge the particular religious tradition and lead it to a self-critique regarding the areas and concerns which I mentioned earlier. Once the critique of religion came mainly from the secular-humanist forces. It is heartening to see that such a critique is taken over by humanistically sensitive and politically conscious theology in each religious tradition.[14] But the degree and intensity of such a theology varies according to the present condition of the different religions. But the task of a politically-based dialogue calls for the activation of this type of theology. A critical theology can contribute to significantly change the perception of the political process on the part of Christians.[15]

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[13]For the development in the self-understanding of Indian Christianity, cf. K. C.Abraham, "Reinterpretation of Christian Tradition in Contemporary India," *Jeevadhara, vol. 26,* no. 151:35-44.

[14]See Joseph Tharamangalam, art. cit

[15]In an article written in *Frontline* (March *22, 1996),* the deceased communist leader E.M.S. Namboodiripad had tried to pain in broad strokes the shifts in the attitude of the Catholic church in India, specially Kerala, regarding the social

Another important issue is the selective use of religious tradition for politic purposes.I just want to briefly mention the question here without elaborating it. Every religious tradition has in its repertoire a wide range of materials, symbols, rituals, cult personalities, and so on. Which of these are selected and interpreted for public consumption has become today a political act. The construction of the identity of a religious community will very much depend upon the use of these materials. In the context of present-day militant and aggressive discourses which press into service a particular brand of religious materials from the past, it is important to highlight from the same tradition more open to a universalistic resources. This should be the work of critical theology reflecting from within which can facilitate a meaningful dialogue among the various religious communities existing in the Indian polity.

5. Critical Reading of History and Tradition

One of the very crucial areas today which affect the relationship among the various communities - specially the religious groups- is the reading and interpretation of history. The Ramjanmabhumi-Babri Masjid issue with the demolition of the mosque in Ayodhya some years ago, has been but one outrageous instance of a much larger problem. The Indian historiography and its periodization, read from the perspective of religious groups, has become a burning political problem.[16]

Political equations change according to whether one presents history in such a way that Hinduism, the original religion, is one that has suffered violence and humiliation under the "alien" religionists of Islam and Christianity; or, whether one sees the identity of India a composite reality made up of diverse religious traditions and cultures, the history of each one

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question and attitudes towards political parties. His comments were occasioned by the Statement of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Indian in view of the 1996 elections.

[16]See the various contributions in Vasudha Dalmia and H. Von Sietencron (eds), *Representing Hinduism. The Construction of Religious Tradition and National Identity,* (Delhi: Sage Publications, 1995); Guenther D. Sontheimer and Herman Kulke (eds), *Hinduism Reconsidered,* Manohar (Delhi, 1991); cf. also Sarvepally Gopal (ed.), *Anatomy of a Confrontation. The Babri Masjid- Ramjanmabhumi Issue,* (Viking, Delhi. 1991)

of which has enriched and enhanced the one nation. The attitude one adopts versus others religious groups will differ accordingly. When Indian identity is defined by one religion to the exclusion of others, then we run into serious political problems. On the other hand, one has to come to terms with the Hindu perception of their sufferings as a result of invasion colonization associated with Islam and Christianity.

The difficulties regarding the historiography and its political implications is not only a Hindu-Muslim issue, though this may be the most grave and critical case. Such difficulties persist regarding the relationship between Hinduism and Christianity. We may recall here the two controversial works by a well-known journalist Arun Shourie.[17] By no means are these works to be taken as representing *the* Hindu view. Nevertheless what the author expresses is part of the underlying attitude of a section of Hindus towards Christian history.

There is no point in arguing that these are matters of the past. The present politics is very much affected by the way history is reconstructed to persuade and mobilize the masses. In this regard I want to refer here to a very interesting distinction made by Paul Tillich. In political theories, he distinguished between "myths of origin" and "myths of destiny". This is applicable as well to the various religious and ethnic identities in relation to their perception and approach to history. "Myths of origin, be they religious or ethnic, politically conservative; they hold up the past as a model and raise up barriers against outsiders. Myths of destiny, by contrast, look towards the unfolding of the rational possibilities in society. They dream of the future society defined in terms of equality and justice."[18] A reconstruction of history solely in terms of "myths of origin" to the neglect the challenges of justice and equality represented by the "myths of destiny" will turn out be very precarious. For, it harbours a strong fascist tendency to impose with authority on others its own tenets

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[17]Arun *Shourie,Missionaries in India. Continuities, Changes, Dilemmas,* (Delhi: ASA Publications, 1994) (three reprints in the sanie year); ID., *Harvesting Our* Souls, (Delhi: ASA Publications, 1999).

[18]With reference to Paul Tillich Gregory Baum, "Community and Identity", in Marc H.Ellis – Otto Maduro (eds), *The Future of Liberation Theology. Essays in Honour of Gustavo Gutierrez,* (New York: Orbis Books, 1989), 227. .

and way of life. This danger is inherent in all religions in varying degrees, and could manifest itself at particular historical junctures.

It is important to realize that history is an area in the reconstruction of which the *subject* with all his or her biases is very much involved, and therefore it is always a history for...'.[19] Historiography is often a mixture of myths and conjectures. "Mythic history" fact, "draws upon a stock of familiar stories and myths. Myths provide open forms which are filled with communal meanings ... Mythic history appeals to people's emotions and plays upon their religious feelings. It seeks to mobilize peoples' anger, hatred and aggression and provides them with a target".[20]

If such is the political implications and religious import of historiography, I think, it is very necessary that dialogue be pursued on this question among the different religious groups. A society cannot function properly when the past is recreated in diametrically opposed ways by the various groups subsumed under it. It may look an almost impossible task, given the emotions the question of historiography is charged with. Against seemingly impossible odds, the various religious groups require to dialogue on such issues.

Strategically this would call for a lot of confidence-building measures, lest such efforts end up in futile polemics, bitterness and further confirmation in one's prejudices. The latter could be the case if dialogue is left to the militant and extremist segments in the different religious traditions. Therefore. people, groups and institutions in every religious tradition who are both self-critical and open need to come forward at various levels to initiate dialogue, and thus create an atmosphere for progressive mutual understanding among the religions on historical issues. As it is, the historiography with its myths of origin is dangerously left in the hands of fundamentalist and militant groups to manipulate the public mind and vitiate it.

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[19]John Sturrock *Structuralism,* (London: Fontana Press, 1993), 56 (with reference to Claus Levi-Strauss)

[20]Neeladri Bhattacharya, "Myth, History and the Politics of Ramjanmabhumi", in Sarvepalli Gopal (ed), p. 137

6. Subaltern Question

The power in society represented by the religious groups and the need for evolving consensus among them through political process, inevitably brings in the question of differentiation within the religious traditions themselves. Religious traditions are not monolithic entities. In fact, every religion is composed of many strands, and some of these reflect the experiences of the marginalized groups. Generally, the religious strands represented by the marginal groups have been challenging ones, with the result that they have often been neglected as belonging to a lower order, or branded as "heterodox", or were even violently suppressed, These marginal religious traditions have been mostly the ones which have voiced forcefully the concerns for equal treatment of all human beings, and have shown in practice greater ethical and humanistic sensibilities.[21] They also contain virulent critique of established mainline religious traditions.

Inter-religious dialogue has not only to gain from the religious experiences and ethical insights of the subaltern traditions, but has to particularly pay attention to the *marginalized groups* representing these traditions. For, the subalterns are an important political force in our society. Their religious experiences need to be highlighted today which is important also for their political and cultural self-affirmation. In fact, *the difference* the subaltern groups represent within the same religious tradition is a means for their self identity.[22] As such it has political implications.

Concretely, if we take the case of Hinduism - whose identity has become today much-debated political question - inter-religious dialogue cannot limit itself to the elitist strand of it; to the classical doctrines upheld by the upper castes and classes. The religious experience of the dalits, the

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[21]See Felix Wilfred, "Indian Approaches to the Divine Mystery. A Subaltern Perspective" (a paper presented at the Second International Congress of the European Society for Catholic theology, Freising. August 27 - 31, 1995.

[22]The importance of "difference" can be demonstrated also from the contemporary philosophical, specially linguistic, perspective. See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology,* (John Hopkins University Press, 1976); W*riting and Difference,* (London: Routledge, 1978).

backward castes and classes - often represented in movements calling for social and political transformation - have to be drawn within the ambit of inter-religious dialogue today.

7. Structural Mechanisms for Dialogue and Democratization

To my mind, we lack in India appropriate structural mechanisms for a dialogue among religions at the political plane. What we observe at the moment are jarring monologues from each religious tradition about politics aiming at gaining as much-power possible for one's religious group. We need to devise suitable means for the meeting of religions for a dialogue that will build up the democratic process. This is an important task facing all the religious traditions today.

If we observe the political mood in the last few decades, it should be clear that in India the realization of democratic process cannot be achieved with the individual alone as the point of reference.[23] Here, democratic participation takes place collectively, in groups bound up by "primordial loyalties" principal among which is the religious affiliation. One cannot wish away religious groups from the political arena. A secular approach which attempts to keep the religions at bay is not realistic; it simply does not work. The important thing in this situation is that one positively enlists the cooperation of religions. It should take place in such a way that religions do not scuttle the democratic process by overbearing manipulative interventions, but rather contribute to the realization of it. If this should happen, it is indispensable that the various religious groups enter into a dialogue bearing upon the political process.

There is no suggestion here that one unscrupulously hands over the keys of democracy to the religious agents. No religion has yet behaved so credibly as to deserve that. What I mean is that the democratic process should take place at various levels and planes, and one such level is the religious level. And this is facilitated through politically oriented inter-religious dialogue. When religions do not meet at the political level, the consequence is that they try to fight out each other and vanquish one

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[23]For a very perceptive and analytical study on the foundational concept of democracy, cf. Rajeev, Bhargava "What is Democracy" in *Seminar* 389 January 1992 pp. 36-46.

another in the most unbecoming of ways, jeopardizing the democratic process,

A dialoguing participation in the democratic process will strengthen in its turn the relationship among religious traditions also in other spheres. Besides, a dialogical and democratic mood, free from the feeling of threat from one another, enables the religions to play a much-needed ethical and moral role in the society. Finally, through this dialogue at the level of political concerns and democratization, there could result in each religious group a fresh realization of what religion really is and what moral responsibility it bears towards the larger society.

CONCLUSION

Anyone who takes dialogue seriously, will understand that it is no easy path. It is very challenging, and one important reason is that it affects us quite personally and as a community, as a religious group. But, then, dialogue is today the path of promise, the way to resurrection through death to the many things we have always taken for granted. Our faith, our ideals and way of life, we have to re-discover in transfigured form and dimension as a result of dialogue. And here is the importance of an appropriate theology of religions. From our multi-religious context, we in India are challenged to develop a theology of religion that will at the same time lead to re-constuct the self-identity of Christianity.

On the other hand, the process of inter-religious dialogue is also a political question of identity in today's India. The identity of India is the most crucial political question facing us. For, the country is today, as it were, suspended in the air with the loss of faith in the tripod of the nation, the secular and the state on which it was resting. A re-construction of the identity and unity of India is a matter primarily of understanding and adjustment among the various groups, communities and sections represented in its polity. This, in substance, coincides with the democratic process which we need to continuously pursue.

In this frame, the various constituent religious traditions of India need to meet each other and dialogue. And this dialogue will be part of the political and democratic process with a lot of ethical implications. A

fruitful dialogue on this plane would call for a thorough self-critical activity by every religious group. The process of dialogue will involve such crucial issues as the historiography of India, proper use of the religious heritage, the subaltern groups and their religious experiences.

Finally, for a serious politically based inter-religious dialogue to take place, what we urgently require is the creation of appropriate means, structures and mechanisms. Ashram is not equivalent to dialogue; but it is an environment or a means that can facilitate dialogue at a certain level. Politically-based inter-religious dialogue is very much in need of appropriate and corresponding fora, means and structures. This needs to be evolved both at the micro and at the macro level.

MORAL THEOLOGIZING IN THE LIBERATIVE AND PLURALISTIC CONTEXT OF INDIA

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Moral theologizing in India today has to be contextual. It has to encounter the dramatic 'contextual shock', as we are becoming more and more aware that Moral theology taught in our theological faculties is archaic in content and approach. It is very much Western culture-bound, and thus pro-capitalist and 'reformist' in its social orientation. Though we have abandoned the old manuals in moral theology, the method of moral theologizing has remained basically the same. "What has happened in our theological faculties is a substitution of manual theology with what we could call a foot-note theology, namely instead of manuals we follow books which base their theological value and credibility on their footnotes."[1] Most of our courses in moral theology comprise ideas collected from moral theology books written by theologians from the West and grouped together under a traditional treatise. "We have been too long at the receiving end of theologies fabricated abroad and imported with docility and not always with due discrimination."[2] It is high time we stopped theologizing in this manner.

Individualistic Character of Traditional Moral Theology

Our Moral Theology is very much individualistic in its choice and treatment of subjects. While emphasizing too much on the ethical conduct of the individual, it neglects to stress the social, collective and inter-subjective character of our lives and moral behaviour. An indication of this individualistic character is the exaggerated concentration on the sins of the flesh. Permeated with hidden doses of Manicheism and Greek dualism, this Moral Theology anesthetized the prophetic dimension of Christian consciences and refused to undertake a critical and creative reflection in the

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[1]Felix Wilfred, "The Problem of a Valid Starting- Point for Theologizing in India" in Amaladoss, Gispert-Sauch, T.K.John (eds.) *Theologizing in India* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India,1981), p.137.

[2]A.M.Varaprasadam, "Theology Must Happen" in Amaladoss, Gispert-Sauch, T.K.John, *Op.cit*, p.173.

social, economic and political issues. Our Moral theology courses expatiate at length on topics like masturbation, homosexuality, pre-marital and extra-marital indulgence of sex. The books we refer often are silent about the international injustice of colonization of the past and the neo-colonization by MNCs and TNC's of today. They are silent about the pillage and murder of the third world by the developed countries. While these books cry against euthanasia, they forget to speak of the "social euthanasia". They speak so much about the right to ownership and private property and its violations, right to freedom of expression etc, and are criminally silent about the *right to development*, to basic necessities of life and their violations.

Western Outlook of Our Moral Theology

Our Moral theology is greatly Western and it is primarily concerned with the problems of the West. The kind of question we discuss and problems we are dealing are very much conditioned by the issues in Europe, where most of us have been trained. Our Moral theology is pro-capitalist and 'reformist' in its social orientation. Consciously or unconsciously it does not deal with issues that threaten the interests and position of the capitalists. By its allergy to violence and fascination to non-violence, it exhorts our poor to accept their fate with docility and obedience. Love and charity mean social service and does not so much include social justice, conflict and struggle for justice. This Moral Theology is "dominant" in its outlook and style with its diverse mental and religious power structures that always wants to keep the *status quo*.

But can we really be content with this way of moral theologizing? A distinct paradigm shift in methodology, focus, perspective and emphasis is necessary owing to a new awareness of our contextual issues. Moral theology should discover the legitimate implications of the Gospel values in our particular liberative, socio-cultural context and bring them to respond to the vital issues of our moral life and behaviour. Such a hermeneutic approach should form the basis for the emergence of a responsible Moral theology in India.

An alternative approach to Moral theology must be developed in which moral theology begins not with abstract laws or generalized visions but rather

with concrete struggles in particular contexts for charitable justice.[3] What is needed is a different way of moral theologizing, which would be meaningful in the context of the realities of India.

A New Methodology

Most of the trouble in moral theology today can be traced back to the traditional method of doing moral theology. The traditional deontological and teleological approaches tend to ignore the historical character of our existence. Principles and goals would remain empty and give little guidance to moral problems that arise from the particular, changing contexts. Context in which the moral action takes place is as important as the laws and goals. "Decision making is not just a matter of finding the right law or some distant goal, but of finding ways to respond to human needs under particular social situations."[4] Hence the "focus should be shifted from the rger goals to actual context, to the responsible action and to the dynamic interplay between faith and ethics".[5] In contrast to the deductive methodology in both teleological and deontological approaches with its revealed given and analyses, moral theologizing in India should begin with an inductive methodology from actual experience of conflictual situation. Moral theologizing should be rooted in our faith experience. For community's faith experience influences all our evaluations, reflections and confrontations. And in our multi-religious context moral theologizing would be relevant and practical only, if we proceeded from the dynamic interplay of shared faith and praxis with other religious traditions. Any moral theology for India should be ecumenical and interreligious. Dialogue of religions should lead to deconstruction, but in a positive and liberational sense in our moral

[3]Charitable justice is a Christian interpretation of justice modulated by the virtue of love - justice transformed by compassion. According to charitable justice, the due rendered to others is not only what is legalistically owned, but what is called for by love. Charitable justice recognizes the needs of others and goes beyond duty and seeks the higher good of the other person. See Pellegrino and Thomasma, *The Christian virtues in Medical practice* (Washington D.C: Georgetown University Press, 1996), p.127-8.

[4]K. C. Abraham, "Christian Ethics: Methodology Issues" in Hunter P. Mabry (ed) *Doing Christian Ethics: Context and Perspective* (Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore College,1996), p.74.

[5]Ibid. p.75.

theologizing, integrating all the positive values, insights and emphases of Indian religious traditions and mobilizing them to strengthen the society to be more just and participatory. We "should articulate a global ethics which is interreligious or based on our rich religious pluralism without denying our conviction and commitment. Thus for example, Hindu religious communalism has to be met with love and fairness and not with Christian fundamentalism. It is in this spirit that we need to delve deep into the rich resources of Hindu religious traditions and discover the methodology or the interpretative tool with which we can relate Christian ethics to the religio – cultural ethos."[6] Another example would be the Buddhist philosophy of "*dukha* – suffering - as the starting point for any effective praxis of human rights and a meaningful discourse on it. Human beings are those who have deep in them a capacity to be affected by the suffering of others." This spiritual approach of arousing the sprit of compassion latent in people can be a foundation for the reconstruction of human rights with a clear thrust and option for the disprivileged. The West's Human rights tradition in its present form with its emphasis on protecting the freedom of the individual is inadequate to respond to our experience in India and the third world.

Moral theology from the liberative and pluralistic context, presupposes a different manner of interpreting the Scriptures. A new element is brought about by the presence of a plurality of scriptures in our context. In expressing our faith experience in a personal, meaningful and relevant way in our society, only the liberative and life-affirming factors, which are inherent in the Bible, should be taken as the norm. The Bible should not be used as proof text and applied directly. Again in expressing and contextualizing our faith experience, we must take into account the social, economical, political and religious realties of our people. Here the need of interdisciplinary dialogue, especially between the human sciences is very important. Moral theologizing, if it is to be contextual, cannot base itself on false assumptions about society, and so it needs the help of the social sciences, like psychology and anthropology as well as sociology for an accurate analysis and clarification of our context and society. These sciences can be a stimulus in the theologizing

[6]Somen Das "Relating Christian ethics to Indian Religio-Cultural Ethos" in Hunter P.Mabry (ed.) Doing Christian Ethics: Context and Perspective (Serampore: Borad of Theological Education of the sSenate of Serampore college), p.158.

process and also a corrective so that theology does not loose the sense of concreteness.

Such moral theologizing would necessarily be pluralistic, in the sense of pluriformity originating from the diversity of the experiences of the salvific action of God and the response of the community to it. "Pluralism and lack of uniformity can be healthy signs and are in fact needed if theological dimension is to be fostered and developed."[7] Moral theology from our context would be irrelevant, if it bases itself in the codified formulations of the past and does not listen to what the Spirit is speaking to us today.

Agapeic Ethic of Responsibility

The traditional deductive deontologist methodology with its timeless laws and principles is found inadequate today to grapple with the dilemmas we face in our liberative and pluralistic context. An inductive methodology with a relational–responsibility model within a horizon of *agapeic* love would be more appropriate in our context. This can be a useful framework for judging the rightness or wrongness of an external human action. [8]

What this methodology emphasizes is that in conflict situations when we are forced to choose a premoral disvalue, we may admit or tolerate that disvalue if we have proportionate reason taking into account all the factors and restrictions according to the order and hierarchy of values and the order of agapeic love. Proportionate reason does not mean better results or socially desirable consequences. Hence this methodology should not be equated with consequentialism, utilitarianism, or situation ethics or crude proportionalism.[9] It may be called "Agapeic ethics of Responsibility" or "mixed consequentialism" or "mixed deontologism", as there are principles, norms and values to assess the proportionality.

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[7]Geralad J. Mathias "Diversity of Opinion and a Certain Pluralism" in *Jeevadhara*, Vol. XIX. (September, 1989), p.340.

[8]See my article "*Agapaic* Ethic of Responsibility" in *Jeevadhara,* vol. XXX. (November, 2000), pp. 527-549.

[9]We do not agree with the 'Proportionalism' proposed by Peter Knauer, "The Hermeneutic Function of the Principle of Double Effect" in *Natural Forum* no.1? (1967), pp. 132-162.

The traditional deontologist method differ from this method in the question of basic human goods. The traditionalists or deontoligists would insist that we should always be open to all the basic goods. Whereas our methodology would say that because of the limitations imposed upon us by time and space and the existence of sinful structures and our awareness of particular relationships demanding different choices, even choices between basic goods have to be made. We would have to compare the various basic human goods. This would mean choosing in favour of one basic good rather than another in a particular concrete situation, if there were sufficient proportionate reason. Thus for example we would say that we should tell the truth all the time, but we sometimes judge that a greater harm is done by doing so than by deceiving another person. This is conflict. It is real, human and it pervades the whole life. We admit that weighing values is very difficult especially when faced with the conflict of values between basic human goods such as truth or life, honesty or reputation, justice or health, life or marital fidelity. But we affirm that the common denominator to compare these values is what contributes to the *humanum* in each particular situation. It will seem therefore that in any situation of conflict, we need to take into account values as they exist in that situation and as they are related to each other in the circumstances and in the people concerned.[10] In order to have the discernment to know which choice is right we need to be virtuous. We need to learn from our virtuous lives and human experience which kinds of choices best promote human flourishing in various types of situations. Agapeic ethic of responsibility is a methodology that moves the discipline of moral theology out of the confines of a static approach to a dynamic one.

Shift in Focus and Emphasis from the Individual to the Social

Considering the deplorable plight of poverty in India and given the nature, depth and extent of flagrant social injustice and the consequent crisis of social freedom, there is today a 'moral urgency' for shifting moral theology's focus and attention. Moral theology in India should address itself to the burning social issues and problems in India. It should address wholistically the changing and emerging situation of the country and also globally. Its emphasis should shift from the individual to the social

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[10]Bernard Hoose, "Proportionalism: A Right Relationship among Values", in *Louvain Studies* , 24 (Spring, 1999), p. 52.

perspective. We tended to lay emphasis on the ethical conduct of the individual to the oblivion of the collective and social character of human life. We stressed the conversion and transformation of the individuals and considered virtues and vices individualistically. Today, we stand before the task of re-interpreting our Christian moral resources with reference to the concrete socio-political issues and the pervasive influence of oppressive structures confronting us collectively. Every one would agree that there is a crisis of moral values in Indian society. Corruption is a national disease that is rampant. Culture of corruption has sunk so deep into our national fabric that most of us are in some form or other caught in the net of corruption. Rampant poverty and inequality of large masses of people by the globalization policy, propelled by greed - economic policies and political practices that exclude the poor and the minority groups, serious violation of human dignity and rights, evils of communalism, caste and inter-caste conflicts, growing intolerance atrocities perpetrated on Dalits, women and children and population problem, ecological catastrophe arising from the wanton exploitation of nature - these and other social questions need to be addressed by our Moral theology in India. How much of serious reflection is devoted to these problems in our moral theology classes?

Of late there has been a significant shift in moral theology from personalistic to societal analyses. This is a welcome change. Yet there is a long way to go by way of serious attention to the social issues and problems confronted by us in India, and by way of mediating Christian ideals historically and through concrete praxis. Further, in our multi-religious context many crucial problems transcend religious and ideological boundaries. It is imperative then that we enter into an intense dialogue with people of other religious traditions and other world-views, regarding the issues confronting us and respond morally to the present plight of India. In India we have to fight for justice and liberation side by side with members of other religious traditions. We need to develop a theology of justice based on a broad humanism – of *vasudaiva kutumbakam* (which proclaims the divinity inherent in each human being and the essential brotherhood of the family of humans) which will appeal to all men of good will. We need a cultural revolution to help us rediscover our heritage of human values. We need to recover a truer humanism on which to rebuild true moral values. And for discerning the liberative potentials in our culture, we require dialogue not

merely with religious texts and with the religious elite of other religions but with the religious experience of the masses the social movements, folklore, poems and symbols. All these requirements cannot be met within the ghettos that our seminaries are. Therefore the place, the language, contacts, lifestyle activities etc. are to be such as to enable the participant to share the religious experiences of the masses in the service of whom theologizing is to be done. As a starting point for moral theologizing in India, one must therefore inculturate oneself into the popular religious experiences of the masses. To the extent one is able to successfully interpret the social reality, the ethical behaviour and events of the times in the light of faith and communicate his faith experience and reflection to others (eg. to the laity, to the Non-Christians, and other collaborators in the field) to that measure we can say one has inculturated oneself. And this sort of inculturation is required for initiating programs to root out evil social structures and social evils and to work for the welfare of the poor. This is because any programme for social change in India would not take place unless they are religion-inspired and in an experiential atmosphere.

Shift in perspective: Moral theologizing with the downtrodden

Next is the need for a shift of perspective. Today our moral decisions have to see first of all victims of the structures of injustice and oppression. The human person is caught up in the unjust structures of our society, which can be understood only through the eyes of its victims. Moral theologizing in India therefore should be done from the perspective *of* the poor and *with* the poor. A moral theology in the horizon of agapeic ethics of the Beatitudes and the ethics of the last Judgement of the Son of Man, must have a pronounced inclination and sincere concern towards the poor. The emphasis in moral discourse in India should be placed more on doing works of justice *with* the poor *and by* the poor.

Reformulation of Some of the Ethical Concepts

Moral theologizing in India from a perspective of the poor should rethink and reformulate some of our ethical concepts like, love, justice sin and conversion. The notion of love has to be reformulated from the help given to the victims of injustice to the need to go out of one's self to remove causes and structures of injustice. The concept of justice has to be reformulated from

an emphasis given to individual rights and legalism to a more biblical emphasis of charitable justice. The notion of sin has to be reformulated to include also all the collective or systemic evils of the economic, political and cultural structures of our society. A conscientization of sinful structures and social roots of sin is today necessary. Hence the need for a rethinking in our theology of sin, conversion and reconciliation. "Negatively, the theology of sin must speak against liberal individualism that weakens and destroys our communitarian vocation and denies our relatedness to one another and to the cosmos".[11]

Again in moral theologizing from our context, the universally accepted concepts like democracy, freedom of the individual, the dignity of the human person and human rights have to be grafted to our native concepts. When referring to these concepts we merely quote form the findings and experience of another civilization. We have not discovered the corresponding concepts and value systems rooted in our culture, religious traditions and philosophy. Perhaps the most distinctive character of Indian social ethics is that it is dominated by *dharma* (duty). It is the moral law pervading the universe which forms the principle of righteousness from our Indian perspective. This is a definite shift from deontology or teleology. This means according to the Indian perspective, the dignity of the human person is not the source of right, rather "it is the responsibility toward the others that seem to define the status and dignity of humans"[12]. Hence our Hindu brothers do not organize their lives and secular order on the basis of "human rights" but rather on *dharma* (duty, responsibility and service). Also, in their cosmic religiosity- a species of ecological and creation-conscious spirituality the individuals had only obligations and no rights. Besides, in the Indian social system society is composed of unequal members. Our social system "does not consist only in the unequal distribution of the means of production, but also and more particularly, in other aspects: it institutes an interdependence between those who dispose of these means and those who do not, an interdependence which

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[11]S. Arokiasamy, "Sinful Structures in the Theology of Sin, Conversion and Reconciliation", in S. Arokiasamy and Gospert- Sauch (eds.) *Liberation in Asia: Theological Perspectives* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1987). p.113

[12]Aloysius Pieris, "Three Inadequacies in the Social Encyclicals" in *Vidyajyoti* (February,1993), p.82.

is in the end to the advantage of the latter. The rich depend on the poor to a certain extent, thanks to the ritual aspect"(Louis Dumont).[13] Since our moral behaviour is also shaped by impulses received from different religions - from stories, myths and values of these religions, we need to recover these insights and ideals and use them for our moral theologizing.[14]

The Thrust of Justice in our Moral Theologizing

Considering our liberative context the dimension of justice and liberation has to colour in some fashion in all areas of moral theology. And the existential and contextual meaning of justice in India can be better understood only when unjust social structures and injustices are highlighted; when violation of most basic human rights to live, to eat, to basic necessities, to basic primary education are highlighted; when injustices suffered by the poor in the area of ownership, labour, wages are highlighted.

Economic Globalization is a concern for economic efficiency without a concern for social compassion. The process has only added to the heavy economic price the poor people in India pay. The GATT agreement is tilted in favour of trade blocs like the ECM. It excludes world's majority and destroys the environment. Intellectual property rights and bio-resources and information technology is another important feature of globalization. Today the Trade related intellectual property rights agreement of WTO is done in favour of biotechnology owning companies to the exclusion of some of our communities that have developed the traditional knowledge systems. It is obvious that contemporary global capitalism with structural adjustment programs (SAP) is unbridled and badly lacks the checks and counter balances to steer the country towards the common good and will be at the mercy of the investors of MNCs. "There are many human needs which find no place in the market."[15]

When moral theology discusses ethics in medicine it usually treats about abortion, euthanasia, bio-techniques like abuses in *in–vitro* fertilization,

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[13]As quoted in J.B. Chethimattam , "Christian Moral Theology" in *Jeevadhara*, Vol. XIX (September,1989), p. 329.

[14]K.C.Abraham, Art.cit., p.78.

[15]John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (1991), no.34.

amniocentesis, sex determination bioengineering and so on. While ethical reflection is necessary in these areas, there are other health concerns which are more basic than these. Justice demands that we look beyond the individual to the aggregate good of society. It is not justifiable to spend millions of the public funds or scarce resources on individual persons for unproved therapies when we are not providing basic health care for rural poor who usually suffer from preventable morbidity and mortality resulting from malnutrition and infections resulting from extreme poverty.[16] This becomes more crucial in the requests for the use of enhancement technologies in medical practice. The crucial issue here is to distinguish between the therapeutic and non-therapeutic use of genetic engineering technologies which are often very difficult. Even in therapeutic, the priorities should be weighed in the balance with the broader horizons of public health needs such as sanitation, immunization and drug control. [17]

Similarly with regard to environmental ethics, one has to talk about the dilemma we face in India. Faced with extreme poverty, overpopulation, we are caught up in the dilemma: on the one hand, the necessity of making use of 'extreme' technologies (which are eco-destructive) for our economic growth to solve our poverty problem and on the other hand using these technologies in areas like agriculture, forestry and fishing would lead to exploitation and destruction of scarce natural resources and would seriously undermine the survival of the poor communities, who depend on these resources for their livelihood, and would cause large scale unemployment, and uprooting of people and their cultures, besides atmospheric changes. Hence the question, for example: shall a pesticide that might save crops for hungry mouths not be used because of what it will do the people for years from now? This is the moral dilemma with which we are caught up and our choices are not easy. Are we to sacrifice then development and growth for the sake of environment?

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[16]See Esther Galima Mabry, "Women and Health: A Closer Look at the (Une)quality of Life" in Hunter P. Mabry (ed.) *Doing Christian Ethics: Context and Perspectives* (Serampore: Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore college, 1996), p.57.

[17]See my article " The Challenge of Science and Technology to Christian Ethics with a Special Reference to Genetic Engineering" to be published in *Religion and the Recent Development in Science: Challenges and Opportunities ASSR Science-Religion Series* (Pune: 2001).

We cannot afford such a step since industrialization is one of the basic needs of country. The question is how best can we adapt our environment through technology to serve our real needs. It is a question of an ecologically sensitive praxis of moving through a delicate balance between the use of technology and protection of environment. We have to fight for a socio-economically just ecological ethics and at the same time develop an eco-sprituality in line with the kenotic spirituality of detachment and renunciation characteristic of our Indian tradition with an ecological *ahimsa* (non-violence and respect for life in all its forms) *karuna* and *maitri* (compassion, care and kindness for all beings) that tames our violence and exorçises our demonic destructiveness to nature.[18]

From a 'Reformist' to a 'Revolutionary' Moral Theologizing

In its approach of social teaching traditional Moral Theology is largely 'reformist' or 'reconcilionist', with its capitalist ideology still at work in it, trying to adjust with the existing situations and opposed to subverting changes, when it comes to methodology regarding questions of human rights and justice etc. It rejects the 'myth of revolution' in favour of 'reform'. It exhorts the rich and powerful to reform themselves by sharing their riches and power. A reformist or reconciliation that avoids confrontation with those who hold the keys of power cannot liberate poor people. The situation of the poor in India cannot be changed either by some relief work or by the modernization of traditional societies and works, in which the Church is largely engaged with the help of foreign money. We need to think in terms of commitment and subversive action that would re-design the human social relationships, re-distribute the resources of the earth and restructure our society. Instead of a more relevant social analysis based on a 'sociology of conflict and change' that attempts to discern the dynamics operating in society so as to discover the modalities for bringing about radical change in the existing structures, our moral theologizing presupposes an implicit 'sociology of conservation and equilibrium' based on a foundation of immutable laws with their supposed justice. The programme of action derived therefrom stresses the maintaining or restoring of 'law and order'. The

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[18]See my article "Ecological Crisis - A Moral Dilemma" in Bosco Puthur (ed) *Moral Theology Today: Trends and Issues* (Alwaye: Pontifical Institute Publications,1991), pp.127-145.

sympathies and loyalties of our moral theology are seen to be with the established order which it seeks to preserve, by avoiding radical questioning, while advocating charity as an answer to the problems of the impoverished.

In traditional Moral Theology certain virtues were considered good such as endurance, patience, obedience, conformity to rules, silence – certain virtues were unbecoming such as critical stand, revolt, violation of rules, questioning spirit, moral indignation, resistance, dissent and protest. The former set of virtues prepares the person to keep the *status quo* or the established value-systems of a society; the virtues of the latter set needed for social change are not appreciated. Considering our liberative context, we need today to rejuvenate the tradition of protest and dissent in our society. We need to clearly express the fact that if a law was unjust, challenging it was a virtue; that obedience to love for the Kingdom might mean sometimes disobedience. "An important point to be born in mind is that protest or dissent is apart of obedience. Our obedience is to God or Christ and the Gospel values, and when violation of important values like justice, love or dignity of the human person takes place, even if the highest authority does it, we have the right and duty to protest. If we do not, we are 'disobedient'.[19] Violence seems to have become endemic in our daily life. It can be a sign that there are serious problems within a social system that must be corrected. Only if we listen in solidarity to the cries of the victims of oppression can we understand what violence does to people, see its inhuman face and eliminate it. A theology of violence is most relevant to the Indian situation. "Non-violence is not to be misconstrued as non-resistance. Nor is it passivity and resignation in the face of violence and injustice. Jesus did resist evil. He did not run away from his opponents Nor did he give in to them. In fact, he actually raised the level of conflict by openly siding with the poor and the oppressed against the established authorities."[20] Active nonviolence counters evil through ways other than violence. Nonviolence not only resists evil, but if properly employed resists it more effectively than violence does. It liberates the oppressor who is also enslaved by the structures which he dominates. But the

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[19]Varghese Manimala, "Structural Violence, Human rights and the Right to Protest" in *Jeevadhara*, Vol. XX (November, 1990), p. 492.

[20]Felix Podimattam, "Violence and struggle for Justice" in *Jeevadhara*, Vol. XX. (November, 1990), p. 500.

ideal of non-violence does not contain in itself all the answers to all our questions. These will have to be met amid the risks and anguish of day to day politics. At least "Resist not evil" cannot be regarded as a general norm, since this would make an orderly community life quite impossible. While the Christian ideal is reform by love and persuasion, our doctrine of sin inform us that force, violent or non-violent is necessary to prevent evil and injustice. We need to be reminded that force can sometime be used to achieve justice. That every unjustly oppressed community has a right to act against an unjust aggressor, with violence if need be. We must opt for a realistic ethics with its regard for the concrete in our context. Many of us tend to condemn open and insurrectional violence, while at the same time we condone the subtle and institutional form in which it thrives in the body politic. Violence is by no means a gospel value. Yet there are human situations in which only one form of violence would seem capable of removing another form of violence. How to judge the morality of resorting to violence in those cases? And there are instances in which it is not directly intended but may be foreseen as a likelihood. I am not advocating violence as the panacea for all our ills. Contextualizing our moral theology of justice, our methods of *ahimsa*, *satyagraha and sarvodaya* should, in principle, be able to offer solution more in keeping with its spiritual traditions and historical evolution.

In general, the theology of justice and non-violence are subject to serious distortions by moral theologians propounding ideas which serve their own interests and those of the class to which they belong. The criminal nature of silence and neutrality in questions of global injustice should be studied. The prophetic and social dimension of conscience as the voice of the 'Other' and 'others' and its formation by listening to the voice of the voiceless should be more and more emphasized.[21]

Considering the structures of international injustice whose victims we are, we need to fight for a global ethics, based on the *humanum* and comprising the basic values, ideals and truths common to all cultures (transcultural values or core values). Hindu ethicists distinguish between *Sanatana dharma* and *vishesha dharma*. The *sanatana dharma* is inherently transcultural and transtemporal and consist of values like tolerance, respect

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[21] For an elaborate treatment of this, see my article "Conscience: Voice of the Voiceless" in *Indian Theological Studies*, 24 (March, 1987), pp.41-68.

for life, social justice etc., without which social life would be impossible. We need such an ethics for protecting and fostering our fraternal communion and solidarity, especially in the context of the international injustice and ecological crisis. Arguing for a meta-ethic with transcultural values does not eliminate contextual interpretations of them. A Global ethics of responsibility can bring together the various cultures, ideologies for a liberative praxis. Commitment to human rights and social justice should be based on a vision of the whole of humanity as brotherhood/sisterhood of all and Fatherhood/ Motherhood of God. It should be based on a vision of *dharma*, a duty or obligation. The value of Justice has to be transvalued by the trnascultural value of charitable justice. Today when one can hardly act correctly locally without thinking globally, we need such an ethics with reciprocal obligation between people of one place to another and between different generations.[22] We need then a moral theology of human solidarity within a shared Earth and a common destiny, within a plurality of perceptions, faith experiences, within dialectic of the local and the global. In brief, we need a prophetic moral theology that will critique "prince and priest, market and mammon, multinationals and war merchants and all hegemony and all plunder of the poor"[23] by the superpowers or local magnets.

Today moral theologizing must be so restructured as to make social diapraxis an integral part of it. Although more and more seminaries are getting involved in social services, still the horizontal dimension of most seminarians and religious has not grown to a marked degree. "Even the social involvement of the seminarians, though carried out well, has the tendency to become an exercise or requirement rather than an occasion to identify themselves with the suffering masses or to have an experience of the poor people."[24] At least it has not become a matter of conviction. In a survey taken among the bishops, priests and seminarians to a question "What do you expect from priests?" they have highlighted celibacy, obedience, holiness,

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[22]See my book *The Claim of Justice in the Third Millennium* (Bangalore: JIP Publications, 2000), pp.195-214.

[23]Final statement of the 4th General assembly of EATWOT.

[24]Sebasti L. Raj, "Priestly Formation in India: A Balance Sheet" in *Indian Theological Studies*, Vol. XXXVIII (June, 2001), p.181.

forgiving attitude as their priorities, but no mention of "justice". There are bishops and ecclesiastical authorities, who frown upon priests or religious who work for the promotion of social justice among the oppressed. Yet our mission as Christians and priests is service of faith of which promotion of justice is an absolute requirement. If there is any moral theology based on Christ's moral message, it should arise not from the isolation of the hallowed and closed rooms of the seminaries, but from the communitarian experiences of the struggle against the atrocities and injustices humans inflict upon other humans and from participation in the struggles for justices, peace and brotherhood. It has to evolve from committed reflection and from honest and sincere dialogue with the poor and oppressed, with other religious traditions and with revolutionary movements for a decent life for the poor. In recent years in some seminaries there is exposure and involvement in social justice issues and grass root experiments by some seminaries. Seminarians in groups live in slums and experience the life of the poor. There is a lot of emphasis on social justice and conscientization of the poor and social service activities. This is a healthy development.

A Few Critical Remarks

1. By contextualization what we mean is an immersion in and identification with, the contemporary life of the Indian masses. Too often we are insulated from any real contact with the hard everyday consequences of injustice and oppression. The moral theologizing in India done in seminaries are quite cut off from the real life of our people. Generally speaking we, moral theologians, are uprooted men, who have undergone a Western and thoroughly alienating intellectual formation. As a result we run the risk of not being able to hear the cry of the poor for justice. If the poor are not under our eyes, they gradually distance from our hearts as well. How can we keep alive nearness to the poor and solidarity with them in our daily reality?

2. Social dimension of peoples' consciences has to be aroused leading to mass action and revolution. Many of the structural changes that we addressed here would not be possible unless combatted and overcome by social and political process that is genuinely participatory with accountability to the people. Structural changes will not happen unless the people capture the parliament, by using the electoral system to send good people to the legislatures.

3. Talking about involving in the masses, one should talk about the interculturality that is prevalent in India today. Often what it implies is the dominant culture of the economically powerful and the dominant elite. This culture is an artificial product manufactured through the mass media by the vested interests of the dominant group. This culture with its show, expensive consumption, violence, competition is bringing problems of consumerism, overexploitation of nature, rival conflicts and collective insecurity to many. It has also created a 'culture of silence' regarding the culture of the poor, the ordinary folks and the tribals. This is a great obstacle to the integral liberation of our people. Our Moral theology has to conscientize our people about the evils of this with counter culture measures. It can be done by transforming of values and thinking pattern of our people. Now, if the shared meaning and values which inform the way of life of our people is to be integrally liberative, interculturality that is emerging today should incorporate the liberative meanings and cultural values given by our religions and philosophies. It is here our Moral theology can work for an alternative counterculture required for the egalitarian community, where are all are freed from pride and greed. A massive organized reaction to the dominant interculturality of our day has to be articulated and carried out. The values in the culture of the poor and marginalized, especially of the tribal peoples which include extraordinary values of solidarity with nature, egalitarianism, a non-competitive collaboration with one another and filial (not mercantile) relationship with land, which offer a valuable alternative and counter-culture potential for the dominant interculturality. Unless the resurgence of these oppressed cultures play the counter-cultural role in the dominant interculturality that is emerging today, integral liberation and justice for our poor people will not be possible.[25]

4. Moral theology that is divorced from action is inadequate. In our moral theologizing we need a more praxis-oriented approach that considers the context seriously and that is rigorously critical of theory and praxis. It looks as though learning and diapraxis are running on parallel lines, instead of one flowing from the other. How else to explain the fact that current upsurge of activism goes hand in hand with a corresponding neglect of

[25]For further details of this, See my article "Towards a Liberative Interculturality of Philosophy and Religion" in Gregory D' Souza (ed.) *Interculturality of Philosophy and Religion* (Bangalore: NBCLC, 1996), pp.217-225.

serious study? Does this not point to a realization on the part of students that, what is taught in classrooms is totally irrelevant for practical life? If Moral theology and praxis never meet, the fault is not of praxis but of moral theology. The social praxis must be the testing ground for theological reflection. It is time to question also some of our traditional type of social service.

5. Another issue is the dissenting opinions of moral theologians from the magisterial teaching today on many topics. These opinions should be presented as dissenting opinions to the seminarians and they "should be exposed to the different approaches to the moral problems. They should always be made aware that there can be more than one possible approach to a problem and therefore possibly more than one solution to it. One should be slow to absolutely and categorically rule out approaches and solutions as totally wrong."[26]

6. In teaching moral theology with passion and with deep commitment the personality and credibility of the teacher plays a decisive model role. How can we be credible when we teach our students to stand up against the consumerist values of power, prestige and comfort, when we ourselves perhaps contributes to the prevailing hierarchical culture in seminaries, where there is so much importance and value to power and status?[27] Our foreign training abroad heavily moulds our cultural consciousness. Hence the imperative of getting rid of such elements from our personality. We should be conscious of our responsibility to build up the social dimension of the consciences of our students. In this connection I would suggest that we should evolve our own modality of moral theologizing by making it more pastoral and spiritual. Our Moral theology should also become more self-reliant by freeing itself from external influences and resources and ridding itself of the paternalistic attitudes and directives.[28] Our aim should be not merely fill the students with information but at raising critical questions of morals in praxis and in relation to our context. This would need updating and

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[26]Gerald J Mathias, *Art.cit.* p.340.

[27]See Sebasti L.Raj *Art.cit.*, pp. 169,183.

[28]See Thomas Srampickal, "Present outlook is better! ", in *Jeevadhara* Vol. XIX (September,1989) p.238.

proper revising of our notes. It would call for examining the students with *viva voce* examination rather than the memory-based written exam.

7. Importance of Vernacular as medium of instruction. "To theologize in a foreign language is to remain outside the life-current of the masses."[29] Moral theologizing should be done as far as possible in the vernacular This is all the more needed because language is not only a means of communication but also an original mode of social being and is thus the key to the self understanding of people.[30]

Conclusion

Doing moral theology in our pluralistic and liberative context with our brothers in other faiths and with the marginalized amidst hunger, tears, sweat and blood alone would bring home to us and our students certain hard truths and lead us to elaborate principles of social justice and love in the face of greediness, domination and naked power. It would make us aware of our real vocation as moral theologians guide us all into a just and loving community of brothers and sisters of Christ under one Father – which is God's dream for the world.[31] Of course, a moral theology emerging from such moral theologizing will inevitably be provisional and revisable. But it will provide a framework within which we can make moral judgements as responsible persons so that our moral lives become best possible mediation of the agapeic love to the temporal realities and relations. It will guide us for establishing a pattern of moral life as authentic disciples of Jesus.

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[29]S.Kappen, "A New Approach to Theological Education" in Amaladoss, Gispert-Sauch, T.K.John (eds) *Theologizing in India* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India,1981), p.65.

[30]*Ibid.*

[31]See my article "Doing Moral Theology with the downtrodden and Integral Human Freedom", in *Louvain Studies* 13 (1988), pp. 209-231.

CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP AND INTER-RELIGIOUS APOSTOLATE

John B. Chethimattam♦

CMI Major seminary's shifting from its earlier existence as S.H.Theologate, at Chethipuzha in Kerala to its reincarnation as Dharmaram College, Bangalore, was itself a theological sea-change. Moving away from a theological curriculum calculated to form priests committed to the Syro-Malabar tradition and its ministry almost exclusively to Syro-Malabar Catholics, and coming to more central a place like Bangalore, one had to take stock of the whole Indian situation in which Catholics or even Christians are a small minority. It had to widen the scope of apostolate so as to embrace the whole population of India. This has greater importance in the modern age when faith and reflection on faith have lost their impact on a majority of people. Christian mission is to communicate to all what God did in Jesus of Nazareth for the sake of all his children. As *Nostra Aetate* of Vatican II clearly states what unites all humans is the fact that they belong to the same race. Since the religious history of humanity is one, the various religious leaders like Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed and their unique contributions belong to all. Similarly the existential questions like the origin and sustenance of things, life after death and the meaning of suffering are common to all and the answers to these riddles provided by the different religions form the common patrimony of all. So the leadership, which Christians can provide to the world today, is to enter into dialogue with people of all faiths and see how the various questions common to all humanity can be resolved in fidelity to Truth.

In this theological apostolate, the Indian cultural tradition in which we have to discuss various religious issues, is the birth-right of all Indians and has special relevance for the world at large where the old philosophies traditionally invoked to support faith have lost their glamour as perennial philosophies and a good deal of their influence as well.

Theology itself is faith seeking rational understanding and has to be geared to the effective service of all God's children. We are all one people of God, in which some happen to be Christians, some Muslims and others

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Hindus or people of other faiths. A few major events at its beginning went to define the identity of Dharmaram and its commitment to theological leadership in a multi-religious context. One was the All India Study Week organized by the Catholic Bishops of India at the Catholic Centre, Madras, 6-13 December, 1956 on "India and the Fullness of Christ", to discuss the missionary approach appropriate to the Indian context. Another was the follow up to the same, a meeting of the Seminary rectors and teachers of India held at Bangalore an year later from 28th December 1957 to 2nd January 1958 to think about the proper adjustments to the seminary curriculum. A third decisive event was the All India Seminar held in Dharmaram College in 1969 on how to implement the decisions of Vatican II in the Indian context. There were several other events in the life of Dharmaram such as the starting of the Centre for the Study of World Religions, publication of the Journal of Dharma and the establishment of the Pontifical Athaneum, the central scope of all of which, was how to provide religious leadership to the multi-religious and multi-cultural population of India.

Situation of Theology Today

One has to recognize that today's world has little appreciation for organized religion and systematic theology. A quarter century ago *Journal of Dharma* in its first editorial wrote: "Today a good number of our fellowmen find religious traditions disillusioning and irrelevant to their life and context. Moreover, there is a growing consciousness that we are living under a common threat of physical, moral and even spiritual cataclysm."[1] The situation has not changed a quarter century later. If at all it has only grown worse. Henri J.M.Nouwen says:

"There is little praise and much criticism in the Church today. The secular world around us is saying in a loud voice, 'We can take care of ourselves. We do not need God , the Church or a priest. We are in control. And if we are not, then we have to work harder to get in control. The problem is not lack of faith, but lack of competence. If you are sick, you need a competent doctor; if you are poor, you need competent politicians; if there are technical problems, you need competent engineers, if there are wars, you

[1] *Journal of Dharma*, Vol. I, # 1, 1975

need competent negotiators. God, the Church and the minister have been used for centuries to fill the gaps of incompetence, but today the gaps are filled in other ways, and we no longer need spiritual answers to practical questions'".[2]

On the other hand "Beneath all the great accomplishments of our time there is a deep current of despair, loneliness, isolation, lack of friendship and intimacy, broken relationships, boredom, feelings of emptiness and depression."[3] Bret Easton Ellis in his well known novel Less than Zero gives a most graphic description of the moral and spiritual desolation behind the present façade of wealth, success and power, particularly the life of sex, drugs and violence among the teenage sons and daughters of the rich and famous entertainment personalities of Los Angeles in U.S.A.

One has to bring out clearly the need of faith in this situation of despair. "Most people turn to their reserves of faith in moments of distress and stress, expecting some metalogical cure of their problems."[4] This reaching out to faith is quite reasonable , since "we are accustomed to speaking of the sacred as an entity intrinsically vaster than life; we regard it as a transcendental energy of presence that animates the world, a cosmic ordering principle that helps us make sense of our experience."[5] There is complementarity between faith and reason, because without the reasonable reach out to faith we are led either to mere sentimentality or mere mechanical ordering of life by mere do's and don'ts. Trust in another's experience and witness is a normal way of knowing things that do not come directly under our perception. Faith is a constitutive element of human existence. Hence it is naturally inter-religious with a common basis across cultures and traditions. But knowledge so gained has limitations, and even with an appeal to divine revelation, what is revealed is filtered through human consciousness, which demands verifiable evidence. Blind faith is bad faith. We have to be wary of the underlying, socially derived presumptions, which prejudice our presumed objectivity. Since we are not the ground of our being, faith, as an act, reach

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[2]Henri J.M.Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*, London: Darton, Longman& Todd, Bandra: St.Paul's 1997, P.26.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Gowri Narayan, "Seeing in the Dark" *Hindu*, 23/9/01 folio 4/8.

[5]Ranjit Hoskote, "Faith in Transition", *Hindu*, 23/9/01, folio 0/6.

beyond the horizons of the human. But to reach the content of faith one has to go beyond Enlightenment rationalism which absolutized reason, and pure empiricism that absolutized sense experience, and make use of deconstruction of traditional statements and alternative methods of hermeneutics to reach the truth. Only a self-reflective experiential methodology is meaningful to the discourse of faith. An inclusive humanism must embrace both meaningful faith and sensitized reason in order to bring about a healing wholeness to a broken totality. [6]

Dharmaram Identity

When it was question of raising Dharmaram College to a Pontifical Athaneum there was an urgent need to define its academic identity. First for many years it was affiliated to the theological faculty of the Gregorian University, Rome. When in 1971 the Archbishop of Bangalore wanted to include it as a constituent member of the proposed Catholic University of Bangalore, the Dharmaram community strongly resisted the move. After strong representations to the Roman authorities Dharmaram was permitted to retain its oriental, Indian and interreligious theological perspective, and the Archbishop of Bangalore generously withdrew his objections. Rather than any fidelity to a presumed Chaldean connection what was emphasized was the clearly Oriental tradition of the Apostolic Church of St.Thomas. Besides, to be relevant to the Indian population one had to follow thought pattern of the Indian religious tradition and also be open to the concerns of the many Eastern religions which considered India as their Mother land.

So *Journal of Dharma* from its very beginning in 1975 held that in the present situation of a loss of faith facing all humanity, world religions, which deal with the deepest concerns of humans, have a great responsibility to present a justification for the hope they preach to humanity. In the very first editorial it discussed the six basic dimensions of inter-religious theologizing today, the convergent history of religions, their common hope, their need for each other, the communications explosion today, the unique contribution that each religious tradition made to the one religious history of humanity, and the temporality of the transcendental.. i) Religions are fast moving to a crucial

[6] See Rudolf C. Heredia, "Dichotomy or Dialectic: Ten Sutras on the Faith-Reason Dilemma," *Hindu*, 23/9/01 folio 3/9.

moment in their convergent history, when their differences hold only a second place in the dominant awareness of their common tasks. ii) In spite of the widening gap between the rich and the poor, between the developed and the developing nations there are some signs of hope that encourage religions in their common endeavour. iii) There is also an increasing realization that no nation, group or religion can make it alone. At the same time the untold dimensions of Truth have always been explored anew by each religion, and this has brought growth and maturity to move towards an ever fuller understanding. iv) Today owing to tremendous progress in communication and conveyance the world has shrunk to a large village, where the encounter of people of different faiths in a single community has created its own problems, to solve which one has to take into account the religious outlook of his neighbor. So interfaith dialogue has to examine in depth the basic religious problems, perspectives, methods and approaches of the different traditions. v)The scope , however, is not to discover the common denominator among religions, either a common concept of God or a common *humanum.* A God reduced to a minimum concept is no God, and in a common *humanum* the individuals are lost. So the task is rather to bring out and acknowledge the unique contribution of each tradition. What we find, therefore, are common issues, the existential problems or riddles confronting all humanity. But the human concerns themselves are different: For the Greeks thinking started in wonder at the phenomena of nature and the problem was the flux and instability of things and the search was for a point of stability. The Hebrews and people of the Middle East as a whole ran against the existence of evil in a world created by a good and all powerful God as the main question, while for yet others human suffering was the primary question. The solutions also are different, though they are rather complementary than contradictory. vi) As the transcendental is realized in the temporal, religion is always time-bound and culture centred. Since different religions took shape in different cultures an inter-cultural understanding is necessary in order to grasp the various dimensions of the articulated faith. At the same time as being committed to one's own faith and its cultural expression, one has to reach out to other faiths and their cultural expressions. This means one should have a critical attitude towards one's own culture in order to clarify its obscurities in comparison with the expressions of the same faith in other cultures. This means that "there must be an inner dialogue in

each religion, by which it will with a constant reference to its own inner logic examine each religious problem anew in the ever changing actual situations, using also all the help provided by other religious traditions."[7]

God, a Relational Absolute

The first issue in any theological exploration is the very conception of and approach to God. This was somewhat indicated by Swami Vivekananda's criticism of Christianity and other historical religions: "The sacred books of the Christians and the Buddhists are different from ours because they are historical, not religious books. They deal with histories of the deluge, kings, dynasties and great men.These are just historical accounts (Puranas) and nothing more, whereas the Vedas were never written; they were never made.. They have no historical character. Therefore they are right. Because the Christian Scriptures are historical, it is clear they were made at some time by someone; they are man-made whereas the Vedas are not so. The non-historicity of the Vedas proves their superiority." This statement of Vivekananda, who was imbued with British logical positivism represented the average Indian's approach towards his culture permeated by an air of self-sufficiency, which rendered him hostile, and impervious to new and external influences. God is conceived as an impersonal absolute, *nirguna.* All our relation to God as *saguna*, present in history and human life is considered as our mental projection. Abbe Monchanin (Swami Paramaarupiananda) in his keynote paper at the Madras Study Week in December 1956 showed that the divine Absolute whom all religions recognized as God, the One-alone-without-a-second was not the projection into infinity of any abstract concept like being or truth or goodness or consciousness denying it all limitations. Any absolutist understanding of God which pretends to view all things from the side of the Supreme Being, or the pure Subject of consciousness, is simply a projection of one's limited concept.

During the Axial Period between 900 and 200 B.C., when humanity passed from the logical stage of thinking to metaphysics, religions had split among themselves on the score of differing perceptions of the Deity. It took a long time for people to understand that God is incomprehensible for finite minds and that even if one were to put together all the different conceptions

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[7] *Journal of Dharma*, l.c.

about the Deity it could never be adequate, but would only be like the composite picture of an elephant drawn by a bunch of blind people. The very term 'absolute' is a negative qualification, just removing the limiting conditions of human conceptions. Hence religion is seen to be more about humans and the meaning of their lives in relation to God as their ultimate goal, than about the inner nature of the divinity. God is fundamentally relational: Good is diffusive of itself, Consciousness emerges into self-consciousness as Word and Self-gift. In fact, as Aphrahat, the Persian sage stated, the moment we recognize that Divinity cannot be understood from within itself, we who are made in the image and likeness of God can project that image up to God himself, his eternal Word and the divine Spirit. .

This relationality is found implicitly in the Vedantic definition of Brahman as 'saccidananda'- Being-Consciousness-Bliss. There is a mental dialectic involved here. Finding the world out there, the source of pleasure and pain, as limited and perishable, its experience is characterized as non-knowledge, *avidya,* and *maya*, something produced by will and desire, like the things produced by a magician. So the innermost core of the experiencer is seen as 'atman', Self. Then the world out there appears as a sort of message, a limited world, which reflects and communicates the eternal Word, the *Vak, Nadabrahma.* This eternal Word points to the *Ekam Sat*, the one Being. So *saccidananda* is the inner dialectics of the Godhead, the self of the Self leading inwards to the Word and finally reaching the silence of Being..

Christians also follow the same method. St.Augustine, for example, finds the best image of God in the human soul, generating its own self-image and self-gift. The Bible looking for the Creator of heaven and earth, comes to a personalistic understanding of God. According to the *Book of* Genesis the first experience of Man, the conscious crown of creation, is that he is in some manner made in the image and likeness of the Creator. It is not the relation of a furniture to the carpenter nor of a building to the masons, but much more intimate like that of a child to its parent. So humans find the courage to call God, Father. Since God is spirit he does not work with his hands but with his *dabar*, the Word. This Word is distinct from God but at the same time equal to him as his perfect image, and also identical with the one divinity. Only in this creative Word can creation itself return to its origin, as its final goal. This

is why Thomas Aquinas made the radical departure from the theological perspective of Peter Lombard, for whom theology was essentially the discussion of the nature and attributes of God . For Aquinas its basic theme was the emergence of all things from God and their final return to Him. God makes man alive by the gift of breath. That breath is God himself, his self-gift as Spirit.

Nature of Faith

Naturally allied to the conception of God is the idea of faith. Though one cannot have an adequate knowledge of God it is possible to surrender oneself to the Supreme Good as the ultimate goal and meaning of one's life. Here again there is possibility of a diversity of approaches. Faith is accepting something not for its objective evidence but on account of our confidence in someone who bears testimony to it. So there is a tendency to reduce all faith to the acceptance of a series of propositions or statements. The Scholastics tended to reduce all divine revelation to statements of God about things that cannot be discovered by human experience such the triune nature of the divinity, immortality of the soul and the like. But behind this acceptance of propositions is the acceptance of the witness, God who bears testimony. For Buddhism sraddha or faith is the magic ring that by a mere touch makes muddy water crystal clear. It is taking one's whole life in hand and making a leap in the dark trusting in the word of the guide, the Buddha. For Judaism, Christianity and Islam one aspect of this faith is the confidence that God as pure intelligence and consciousness has disclosed himself to rational beings through the various created things, many special events in history and through intermediary beings. It is not simply the subjective confidence that what one believes is true. Faith is necessarily objective and inter-subjective. But it is not merely believing a few propositions or statements as coming from God through revelation. When Jesus tells his disciples that it was owing to their lack of faith that they could not cure the epileptic brought to them (Mk 9: 19-28; Mt. 17:14-21; Lk 9:3-43) what he meant was not mere subjective confidence in their power to cure, but rather their closeness to God, who can accomplish all things. The faith that moves mountains comes from the power of God. (Mk 11:22-24; Mt. 21:20-22) The essential aspect of this faith is recognizing that one has come from God and has to return to him. This is the meaning that some give to the words of Christ to Nicodemus in the

Gospel of St.John: "No one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit" (Jn 3:6). Water and Spirit indicate the emergence of things from the primeval waters by the blowing of the Spirit that was brooding over it like a hen over its eggs.. According to Martin Buber, Judaism tries through this faith to find the eternal in the temporal, in its contradictions and difficulties. Christianity, on the other hand, finds a transcending of the temporal through the Incarnation, the definitive entry of the Word of God into human history, in the birth, life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus a true human being was at the same time the eternal Son of God.

The Fullness of Christ

The central issue, therefore, is the "fullness of Christ", the Incarnation. For all religions including Christianity and Hinduism there are two poles of religious experience, one, the divine, the ultimate ground of being, the Self of one's own self, the paternity of God from which all fatherhood in heaven and earth derives its name, the Allah, the one Creator of heaven and earth, and the other, the human, which represented the ultimate perfection that man could aspire to. In Islam the human pole was the Prophet or rather the Quran, the Divine Law, which he received, and in Sikhism the Guru who through *sangat* and *pangat,* common discipleship and community table, brought all people together. Hinduism presented the human side of religious experience through the different *avatars* of Vishnu who took a creaturely form as fish, tortoise, boar, man-lion, and the like, whenever there occurred a decline of dharma and ascendancy of evil, in order to protect the righteous and destroy the wicked and to re-establish the rule of law. For Judaism the problem was the fall of man through pride and disobedience and the loss of the original innocence and happiness of Paradise, and the remedy for it was a divinely promised Messiah who coming on the clouds of heaven would re-establish the reign of God.

Christianity, however, saw the problem somewhat differently. It was not question merely of disclosing the law of God or re-establishing the moral order, or healing the wounds of original sin and restoring humanity back to Paradise, but rather of leading the whole creation all the way up to its divine origin, namely of raising creation to the fullness of divine likeness and giving humans a share in the life of God himself. For this the Saviour had to be fully

human and also fully divine. This would be an entirely new order of things far different from the righteousness envisioned according to the order of nature. St.Paul who was accused by his Jewish critics of denying the Judaic Law and establishing a law of freedom which would be rather lawlessness, states in his different letters that in the historical event of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ there is a new order of salvation open to all human beings. It is a law of love that the one Son, who is in the form of God and equal to God takes the form of a slave learning obedience up to death on a cross in order to raise creation to his own glory(Phil. 2: 6-11). So the promise of salvation is fulfilled through Jesus Christ born from David according to his humanity and constituted the Son of God in power through his resurrection from the dead. (Rom 1:3). So the call to all humans is to turn away from the cult of idols to the worship of the one true God and to prepare for the second coming of his Son Jesus Christ, whom he raised from the dead. (1 Thess. 1: 9-10).

The Incarnation, therefore, is not a change in God, not a divine event, not the story of a god standing out there in his transcendence and through a gesture of condescension freeing humans from their sad plight. It is a happening from the side of humanity, namely what historically happened in Jesus of Nazareth. An ordinary uneducated human being hailing from an obscure Palestinian village, leading a pious and conscientious life according to the tradition of the Fathers listens to John the Baptist preaching about the Kingdom of God, receives the baptism of repentance among other penitents and suddenly comes to the awareness that he has no self-identity of his own except that of the Son of God and of intimate union with God the Father, and that he is sanctified and guided by the Spirit in all his actions. Thus he is able to gather in himself the whole human history and to become a Second Adam, the head of a humanity moving to fellowship with the divine Trinity. Since he is part and parcel of the one religious history of humanity all have the possibility of identifying themselves with his life and becoming adopted sons and daughters of God in the one Son.

Mary and the Meaning of Matter

Another important aspect of religion is the place and meaning of the material world in the new order of things. Here the dichotomy between spirit and matter, soul and body is transcended. In the Hindu perspective matter is the principle of evolution, *prakrti*, nature, constituted of the three gunas of

reflection, action and limitation, and spirit is light shining by itself, and liberation is to realize the unreality of the phenomenal world and the sole reality of the spirit. Untill this realization would be attained, human life remained a series of births and deaths. Greeks conceived a spirit-matter opposition. The ideal of human life was seen as an ascent from the lowest level of existence in matter through various stages to a final stage of contemplation of supreme beauty and union with the One supreme truth and Good. The Hebrews conceived a tripartite constitution of man, flesh, which put him in communion with the world, psyche that constituted him in himself and spirit that made him commune with God. After death one was supposed to end up in a dormant state. But slowly there emerged an idea of a life after death and resurrection; the body, would be raised to the condition of the spirit. This position first defended by the Pharisees ended up as the central theme of Christianity. When the disciples encountered Jesus after he rose from the dead, they came to the realization that their Teacher whom they had known during life was really the Son of God incarnate. Focus of salvation was not an escape from this life but its total transformation. The Resurrection of Jesus was salvation history in miniature, an indication and a guarantee that other human beings also shall rise from death.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a symbol of this new understanding of redeemed human life. Most religions recognize the role of a female principle in human salvation. Many feel the need for a divine Mother to assist in the new birth to a life in God. Many religions have a goddess like Ishtar, Demeter, Lakshmi, or Parvati standing by the side of the Deity as a co-principle, identical with him in essence but with a functional difference towards creation.. Judaism and Islam did not provide much help to this emotional side of religion. For Christianity the original tendency was to see the Holy Spirit as the feminine in God inspiring and moving all those who surrounded the birth of Jesus, and all those connected with the birth of the Church on the day of Pentecost. But later looking from the glory of the risen Jesus back to his human origins the early Church realized the importance of Mary, who in the name of humanity uttered the 'fiat' to God's plan. If Son of God was really incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth, Mary, the mother of Jesus was really the Mother of God. She was full of grace and would be without sin from the first moment of her conception. Intimately united to God in her spirit she virginally conceived her son. At the end of her earthly existence in death,

she was assumed body and soul into heavenly life. All the privileges of Mary were the symbols of the new existence gained by humanity as a whole as the result of redemption. Salvation and new life are not something imposed from the outside but coming from the depth of humanity.[8]

The Indian Approach to Reality

The inherent problem with Christian apostolate is that though Jesus was an Asian and the whole Hebrew thinking was Asian, from the very beginning Christianity had to accommodate and adapt itself to the Greek objectivist way of thinking. There is no doubt that Christian theological thinking has been and still is typically Western. A meeting of rectors and teachers of seminaries held at Bangalore from 28th December 1957 to 2nd January 1958 discussed this issue of an Indian methodology. Several approaches were proposed. Some advocated the method of the *bhasykaras* like Sankara who proposed their philosophical ideas through hermeneutics of Scripture. But in the light of modern biblical scholarship we cannot say about a single verse of the New Testament that this was actually uttered by Christ, or about a single event that this exactly how it happened. The objective of the New Testament writers was not to give an accurate record of events and statements, but rather to actualize their faith experience of Christ in a given context. Some others recommended a cultural approach from the beliefs and concerns of ordinary people. Such a popular religion would have no credibility before modern scientific scholarship shared by people of all faiths. Yet others strongly advocated the presentation of Christianity within the framework of Hinduism, claiming that Christ was already present in Hinduism as *saguna Brahman* or *Isvara*, the "Unknown Christ of Hinduism". But this approach was strongly opposed because it would make the historical reality of Jesus irrelevant to human salvation, throw it into the world of *maya.* It would also deny the real distinction of the Son from the Father, since the Hindu *saguna Brahman* was exactly the same as *nirguna Brahman.* The main thrust of the discussion was that the objectivist approach of Western philosophy that made reality as something out there was alien to Indian thinking. The specific Indian approach to knowledge focused not on the object out there, but rather on the one who knows, catching the knowing subject at the penultimate stage of

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[8]Cf. John B.Chethimattam, "Mary and the Meaning of Matter," in *Indian Culture and the Fullness of Christ*, Madras, 1957, pp.36-45

breaking forth into a statement. For Sankara this was consciousness shining by itself, while for Ramanuja it was consciousness illumining the subject breaking forth into self-awareness.[9]

The focus for any Indian study is the meaning that an object or thing has for a conscious subject. This is measured by the *arudhatidarsananyaya,* the method in astronomy of pointing out one star by reference to other stars surrounding it, or *adhikara*, the educational principle that each topic has to be adapted to the psychological competence of the student. One's conscious self is the starting point to go deeper into oneself to see God as the ultimate ground of being, and the Self of one's own self. The basic problem for Indians was not the bafflement at the phenomena of nature as for the Greeks or the presence of evil in a world created by a good and all-powerful God as for the Hebrews. They started with the nature and causes of human suffering and the means to remove it.[10] One interesting fact is that in this very approach to reality through consciousness there is a dialogue among the different Upanishads which present great many *vidyas* or differing approaches to reality, particularly among the six systems of theologizing. India has dealt with reality on three different levels of consciousness. On the outermost level of experience it is a discussion of individual things or *padarthas* or their logical representations as in the Nyaya-Vaiseshika schools, while on the psychological level the Samkhya distinguishes the fields of Prakrti and Purusa. On the transcendental level the Mimamsakas deal with values and rites and the Vedantins discuss the knowledge of the really Real behind word and symbol, the One-alone-without-a-second. The basis of theology is a mystical experience of God.

The basis and root of religions on the individual plane is mysticism and on the communal level religious life. It is from the intuitive realization of sages and holy men that the community of disciples gathered around these

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[9]Cf. the report of the conference in *The Clergy Monthly Supplement* vol.4,#2, may 1958

[10]Cf. John B. Chethimattam, "The Mystical Experience, the Meeting Point between East and West", *The Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, 1959 "The Indian Mind," *Clergy Monthly*, 1961; "Christianity and Vedantic Experience" *Indian Eccl. Studies*, 1962; 1963, *Consciousness and Reality, An Indian Approach to Metaphysics*, Bangalore 1968, London and New York 1972.

holy men developed, and grew into religious movements that sought to communicate the message of their Masters to all human beings

Inter-religious Ecclesiology

A new factor that affects the self-understanding of the Church today is its acute awareness of the many religions in the midst of which it finds itself. Though it is aware of the universal salvific will of God and unity of the divine economy of salvation for all humans, what stands out in that consciousness today is the plurality of human cultures, the radical difference among different religious traditions and the legitimacy of their differences. Here what is important is an understanding of the origin of the Church as a community among other faith communities. Only very few hold the pre-Vatican II conservative view that Jesus himself created the present structure of the Church, and equally rejected is the opposite liberal view that Jesus expecting an imminent end of the world did not provide for any organized community of believers. The growing consensus is that Jesus gathered a community of disciples which naturally evolved into the Church, with a certain continuity with the New Testament community. In this way the evolution of the Church is seen to follow an inter-religious pattern. All religions recognize a community that share the same experience and feel committed to communicating that experience to all humans. Church sees itself as the sacrament and symbol of the Paschal Mystery, the death and resurrection of Christ through which humanity as a whole gained an access to effective encounter with God. It is the concrete expression of God's will for the salvation of all his children. It is an integral part of humanity's one history of salvation, the common heritage of all. Just as Buddha's enlightenment under the Bodhi tree set the wheel of Dharma rolling for all humans, and the revelation of Quran to Mohammed transformed the bond of blood of the tribes to a bond faith, the birth of Jesus was the effective entry of the Son of God into human history. As St.Paul claims, if one man, Jesus, was really raised from the dead it is a pledge and guarantee that human race itself is saved in him and that all will attain resurrection through him. (1 Cor.15:20). In this way Jesus is made both "Lord and Christ" (Acts 1:36) and is "constituted" through the resurrection the Son of God with regard to the rest of humanity (Rom. 1:3). Jesus is present to all human beings in two ways. Firstly he is present through the Church. His status as the Son of God, life,

work, and resurrection are known principally through the living tradition and witness of the Church, which traces its origin back to him, and through a critical study of the books of the New Testament which record the faith of the Church concerning him. He is also immediately present and available to all humans independently of these external means, since through the resurrection he has transcended both space and time and has become "a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor.15:45). It is through this inner presence the word that is externally announced by the Church gains credibility. (2 Cor. 13:)

The more obvious indication of the inter-religious reality of the Church is the presence of the Holy Spirit. This again takes place in two ways. The core of the Church's celebration of the Paschal Mystery is the gift of the Spirit. The Spirit not only transforms the Eucharistic bread and wine but more importantly is also the one who sanctifies and unites the participants to Christ. In the Western conception the power of the Spirit rather than being rooted immediately in the sacramental liturgy and the community, is seen as first rooted in the priestly office. Liturgy is often seen as what the priest does, rather than as the presence and celebration of the Paschal Mystery. But this liturgical celebration is rather *limited* and reaches only the actual participants. The same Spirit, however, is also invisibly present to all through internal communication of the same Paschal event, as the Spirit of the Lord who puts all things in order. The gift of the Spirit is not a product of membership of the Church, but rather the pre-requisite for membership. Only one who has received the Spirit through the initial gift of faith can be baptized by the Church. Another universal phenomenon that makes the Church really inter-religious is prayer. One activity of inter-religious fellowship is praying together and only through the Spirit can we pray.

Conclusion: Towards a Dialogical Theology

As the very first article in the *Journal of Dharma* stated, religion, philosophy and culture should be bonds and links enabling people to share experience, ideas and ideals, instead of being dividing fences between classes and groups.[11] Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and other religions are a fact of life of the Indian people. What we need is a communion of

[11] See J.B.Chethimattam "Man's Dialogical Nature and the Dialogue of Religions." *Journal of Dharma*, I (1975) 6-89

communions. What unites the believers in this communion is a desire to move religious faith away from narrow concerns with personal life and particular material interests which effectively undercut the meaning of religion itself. The true believers become symbiotes who pledge themselves to each other, by explicit or tacit agreements to mutual communication of whatever is useful and necessary for the harmonious exercise of social life with a religious motivation.

There are good many in India who want to build a Hindu India, which would tolerate Hindu-Muslims, Hindu-Christians and the like. But the irony of this Hindu nationalism is that by itself it is a denial of Hindutva as a cultural perspective. The basic understanding of Hindutva is that it starts with an inner realization of the One-without-a-second and is tolerant of all the different expressions of that ineffable experience. Though faith as an act goes directly to God as the ground of all reality, the content of faith is filtered through human consciousness and has to be interpreted according to the demands of the actual context. Here the human pole of religious experience, whether it be the *avatars* of Hinduism, or the Buddha of Buddhism or the Prophet of Islam or Jesus Christ, the one Son of God of Christianity, is the unifying point. Though presented by different religious traditions, they are the common heritage of all humans, and present different aspects of the goal of human salvation, and offer different avenues for interpreting and actualizing the divine gift of faith.

TOWARD PEOPLES' SPIRITUALITY CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO THE RISING FUNDAMENTALISM

Antony Kalliath♦

1. Human History on a Reverse Gear!

Bharath, the land of Mahatma Gandhi and Buddha, well renowned for her non-violence (*ahimsa*) and tolerance world over, has become "Bloody India" in the eyes of the world community (*Time* March 11, 2002). The horrendous torching of the *kar sevaks* (Hindu activists) in the train at Godhra while returning from the holy site at Ayodhya (Feb 27, 2002), and the following frenzy of slaughter of innocent Muslims and the destruction of their properties show how religious fundamentalism can acquire diabolic proportions beyond wild imaginations possible. The people who perpetrated the Gujarath violence wounded the very pride and identity of the nation in its own eyes and those of the civilized nations. The nation will go to shreds if the ongoing Hindu fundamentalist sweep on the multiculturality of India is given political sanction by the present political governance. Now the whole nation is gasped in a fear psychosis apprehending that the country will go to communal fury and blood shed if the threatening scenario unfolding on the Mandir- Masjid issue is not amicably settled. However, India is not an exception in this regard. This fundamentalist trend is raising its ugly head world wide in different forms and shades. Al Qaedas, Talibans, Osma Bin Ladens have become decisive factors by default in the future course of history. The fundamentalists' attack on the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001, the following Afghanistan war, the ongoing attempt by a 'nexus' of western powers to gather world consensus on the imperative of a military action on the 'axis of evil' (Iraq, Iran and North Korea), the recurring bloody ethnic clashes in Africa, Indonesia, and the growing silent legitimacy of terrorism and war in the name of religion - all these are either 'civilized' or barbaric expressions of the fundamentalist streaks in the dark alleys of the collective human unconscious.

Is the present history moving on a reverse gear to Middle Ages of ethnic rivalry, cultural bigotry and religious hatred? Is human history at the verge of a "Clash of Civilizations"? On the one hand there is a vibrant and

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vital movement towards collaboration and networking of nations in the context of the modern advancement in Information Technology and electronic media, the increased economic interdependence because of the globalization and market economy, but, on the other hand, world is broken and fragmented at the seams because of cultural and religious hatred and mistrust. Though the Third Millennium was welcomed with a bandwagon of grandiose visions and hopes we find ourselves in a 'culture' of crises on all fronts of our life, whether it is in the field of our religious faith or social and political life. One can point out countless reasons for this phenomenon namely cultural nationalism, religious fundamentalism, assertion of ethnic identities, globalization (seen as a neocolonialism in the eyes of the poor nations), cultural invasion into the developing countries through information technology and electronic media, genetic engineering so on and so forth.

2. On the Verge of an Inner Crisis?

Indeed, it is a time of paradigm shift or 'churning' process which brings about a silent and sure deconstruction of the settled foundations of one's identity. For example, in the case of Christian identity, various surveys worldwide indicate that there is an increasing inarticulate or rather a naive awareness that Christianity is no more an absolute religion, and consequently, its dogmas and teachings are not taken seriously enough by the silent majority in the present pluralistic culture. Christians show no spiritual or theological qualms when they go to Zen or Yoga centres for meditation. The situation of Church in India is not different. Owing to the present religious and cultural compulsions in the unfolding political scenario in India, Christians are unconsciously undergoing through a process of reconfiguration of its self-identity and its mission in India. Naturally the spin off sequence of this fluid situation is lack of certainty and focus in Christian theology, ethics, mission and even spirituality. In this total fluid and borderline situation every body feels dangerously free, and becomes the principle unto oneself! Consequently, an assertive fanaticism both at the individual and collective level acquires justification and sanction. One becomes one's own referent and sanction, and drifts into spiritual vacuum without constraints and commitments. In such a context, there is only one way - one's own way!

At the bottom line, the chaos created in this 'culture of crises' zeroes in on a spiritual crisis. In the thick of today's affluence and comfort what is

disturbing and frustrating the modern life is lack of an inner core, a centre which spontaneously and meaningfully configures the conflicting experiences and encounters in the present tightly scheduled fast-track life, both at individual and collective level. This is because we have a free market of conflicting and competing ideologies and values. Today, no system, no ideology, no religion has any monolithic hold over any individual because of the inflow of information through the cyber media unconstraint, and their consequent influence especially on the growing minds. The boundaries of religious, cultural and ethnic identities and entities are blurred and diffused, and are no more geographical. In every field and facet of life there is transculturality and multiculturality which offer a virtual space of immense freedom of choice in the matters of values, faiths, ideologies and life styles without any constraints of conscience. It generates a culture of preferences, privileges, pleasures, and ever changing convenient choices without a lasting commitment to a specific principle as in the past. In the present era of globalization what we find are floating cultures, or rather diffusive cultures without circumferences as well as centres!

Strangely, what we find today is a fatal loneliness in the abundance of freedom and the affluence of modern life. As a result accomplishments often lead to alienation which in turn infects one's competitiveness and resourcefulness, and eventually the inner happiness and peace of life. Kerala (India) which is known as the God's-own-land' has become the land of suicides; the USA, the land of opportunities has the maximum number of suicides. People opt out their life when there is no mission in life, no centre which can configure varied events in their life in a meaningful frame.

Surprisingly enough, today, spirituality has become a key concept in the policy decisions of many giant corporations and multinational companies to increase efficiency and creativity of the executives and workers. SQ (spiritual quotient) is the new mantra after the IQ (intelligent quotient) and the EQ (emotional quotient). In big cities like Bombay, Delhi, Madras, Bangalore there is a mushroom growth of these centres of yoga, reiki meditation, pranic meditation, ancient wisdom, or holistic meditation. Thus 'spirituality' has become a policy matter even in the present market economy to increase efficiency and profit! The following discussion looks at the crisis of spirituality from the point of Christian tradition in the present cultural and religious fundamentalist context.

3. Christian Mission and Spirituality

Vitality and competitiveness of Christianity is correlated with its mission. Pope John Paul II is correct in saying: "In the Church's history, missionary drive has always been a sign of vitality, just as its lessening is a sign of crisis of faith." (*Redomptoris Missio*, #2). Spirituality is the inner strength and vibrancy of any religious faith. Chinks in our spirituality makes the steam of our mission run out because there is no Christian spirituality without a mission; Church is missionary by its very nature. Church is the community which is ek -klesia - 'called out' of the world and sent back to the world. The church is not the sender but the one being sent. Hence its mission ('being-sent') is not secondary to its being. The church exists in being-sent and in building up itself for the sake of its mission. Ecclesiology does not precede missiology. It is one and the same reality. That is to say it is in and through the Christian witness the very Christian self-understanding is achieved. The moment we fail in our mission we are heading toward a crisis in our theology, spirituality, and Christian life as a whole.

Somehow we cannot 'sell' our values, and mediate our vision in the present context of religious fundamentalism. It is a plain fact that there exists an 'undeniable negative tendency' (Redomptoris Missio #5) in our missionary commitment because of a crisis of conviction in theory and so a crisis of praxis. There is an increasing feeling among Christians in India that we have reached a 'limit-situation' in the Christian mission in the present context of anti-Christian vendetta and vandalism prevailing in India.

Soren Kierkegaard the great existential philosopher, explains the crisis in theology through an analogy. It is quite worth mentioning it in the present context. A traveling circus caught fire. The manager sent out their clown to seek help from the neighbouring village. The clown forgot to remove his clownish outfit and make-up in a rush . When the clown explained the mishap and sought help, every one thought that it was either a fun or stunt to attract people to the circus and did not take him seriously. We can very well imagine the frustration of the clown. He is misunderstood and is taken as a laughingstock though he is communicating a very serious and urgent matter in his total sincerity.

I am afraid, we find the same frustration in our Christian witness in the present situation. We are not taken seriously by our Hindu brethren; our

message doesn't reach out to the people. Sometimes the clown is stoned, raped and killed and tortured. Moreover, such heinous acts are justified in terms of religious nationalism.

Vishwa Hindu parishat justified the rape and murder of Christian missionaries by branding them as anti-national elements. The youth raped these anti-national sisters out of their patriotism thundered the VHP top brass! Hindus think that the Christians are betrayers of the nation by accepting Christianity. When Christian 'clowns', are tortured in the name cultural nationalism and religious fundamentalism we have to ask serious questions in the unfolding political scenario of this land. Where is the flaw? Is it with the 'clown' or the people or the message? Or is it with clownish outfit? We have yet to reinterpret Christian message responsive to the cultural and religious sensibilities of India.

4. Meaning of Indian Cultural Fundamentalism

Over the past few years we see a rising tide of anti-Christian activities and, indeed, this phenomenon has a subtle sanction of the present political dispensation. The largest ever RSS congregation, over 75000 of its cadres, gathered on 13th October 2000 in Agra for a week long convention to deliberate on sensitive issues of national security, which prominently included the anti-national activities of "foreign Christian missionaries.[1]

The space and time do not permit me to dwell long upon the anti-Christian surge sweeping across the country today. The following data is only the tip of an iceberg of Hindu resentment toward Christians. *Dharma Raksha Samiti* at the *Vishal Hindu Sammelan* held on January 5, 1999 at Peth had given commanding order to the Christian missionaries in Peth, Nasik district to abandon their activities by March 31, 1999.[2] In an atmosphere which was charged with anti-Christian sentiments, the Shankaracharya of Karveer Peeth, Vidyashankar Bharati gave the ultimatum: "Request them

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[1]The three-day 'Rashtriya Raksha Mahashivir' (national security camp) is organized by Braj region unit of the RSS to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the organization. ("Massive RSS Camp to Discuss ISI," *Deccan Herald* (October 7, 2000):7

[2]*The Hindu* (Jan 17, 1999):11

(missionaries) once, twice, thrice and then take the next-step... Retaliation against injustice is perfectly justified".[3]

See theVHP's future plans which would be an eye-opener for the Christians who are engaged in *Evangelisaion 2000.* The VHP literature *Parichay Mala* series of booklets which were circulated during nine-day meet of VHP in Jaipur (Dec. 1998), listed the outlines of the future course of VHP. i. Drive of reconverting people back to Hinduism in which the VHP targeted 200 sensitive districts in the country. ii. According to the part six of series of Booklets, a corpus fund of Rs. 5 crore was being set up for carrying out the plan. iii. The VHP workers had already contacted 10,000 villages of the country for the purpose. iv. The VHP claimed to have already reconverted 1.8 lakh people to Hinduism. v. The plan for the next year envisaged 'Jan Jagran' (public awareness) campaigns for 'reconversion' in 50,000 villages of the 200 districts. vi. A thousand workers would be trained for carrying out the drive and a 'Shakti Kendra' (power centre) would be set up for every 25 villages in these districts. vii. How to achieve these targets: the booklet 5 mentioned forcible occupation of places of worship and schools run by missionaries of other religions, physically assaulting them at times and 'demoralising' them if needed.[4]

The BJP's main plank is Hindu nationalism, *Hindutva.* Borrowing from a recent Supreme Court judgement, the BJP leadership conveniently defines Hindutva in terms of Brahmanical Hinduism. In an essay on Hindutva that figured prominently on one of the BJP's websites on the Internet, Kamal Darshan, proclaimed that " the future of Bharat is set. Hindutva is here to stay. It is up to the Muslims whether they will be included in the new nationalistic spirit of Bharat. . . The era of one-way compromise of Hindus is over." Inaugurating the first conference of the Rashtriya Sevika Samity (women's wing of RSS) in 1936: Hedgewar asserted, "The nation belongs to those people who have the same culture and tradition and are in a majority."[5]

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[3]*The New Indian express.* (Jan. 6.1999):1

[4]"VHP issues barbaric Commandments," *The New Indian Express* (Jan 1. 1999):9

[5]*The Hindu* (Feb 2, 1998):12.

Instead of condemning bluntly the present anti-Christian vendetta as a mere political ploy of the BJP, and outrightly rejecting it as a fundamentalism the Christians have to 'understand' the communal outbursts of Hindutvavadis in the scenario of new global politics of ethnicity. Samuel P. Huntington[6] proposes a celebrated thesis that world community is stepping into a multi-civilizational global politics. Though there is much talk in currency about the emergence of a universal culture owing to globalization, modern electronic media and IT, in reality what we find worldwide is the assertion of localty, ethnicity, indigenous cultures. Societies sharing cultural affinities cooperate and group together around the lead state of their civilization. Today, the West's universalist claims are challenged and the West is brought into conflict with Asian civilizations of Islam, China, India, North Eastern Countries especially at the backdrop of the vibrant Asian economies and increasing military self-reliance.

During the Cold War, global politics was bipolar and the world was mainly divided into two blocs - the Capitalist and the Communist, though there was Non-Aligned Nations. But today, in the post-Cold War world, global politics has become multipolar and multicivilizational. In this era, the most important distinctions among people are not ideological, political or economic; they are cultural. People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions. They identify with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations and at the broadest level, civilizations. People use politics not just to advance their interests but also to define their identity. Many of the wars in the present post-Cold-War context have been between clans, not classes. Look at the bloody clashes in Somalia, Rewanda, Bosnia, Caucasus, Central Asia, Turkey, Fiji, Iraq, Afghanistan, Kashmir, caste wars in India. The core question inherent in these conflicts is *who we are*. The author argues that the future conflicts will be sparked by cultural factors rather than economics or ideology. Revitalization of religion world wide is reinforcing these cultural differences. In sum, the post-Cold War world is a world of seven or eight major civilizations. Cultural commonalities and differences shape the interests, antagonisms and association of states.[7]

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[6]*The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1997)

[7]Ibid., 20-40

The rising Hindu fundamentalism in the country, even though it is negative and blunt in itself, implies an assertion of Hindu civilization after centuries of suffocation and suppression of foreign powers. India has a history of over five thousand years of human habitation. In her long history, she had never been a trans-territorial political power; hers is a history of invasions which started with Aryan tribes in the second millennium BCE. They were followed by Persians (521-485 B.C.E), Greeks (321-325 B.C.E). Then in the Christian era Huns (454) Arabs (712), Munghols (1230), Turks (1398), Portuguese, French, British (17th c), made military forays into our country. India was under the foreign yoke till the middle of the 20th century. This long period of subjugation, exploitation and humiliation could not destroy Indian spirit. It shows the resilience of Indian civilization

I think that the present assertion of Hindutva has to be seen in terms of the present multipolar and multicivilizational global politics. If so, the antipathy of Hindus towards Christianity is quite natural and spontaneous because Christianity is the core component of Western civilization and above all the Church in India has not become church of India; it is still western both in its form and content. In the recent past (Oct. 10. 00), the RSS leader K.S. Sudarsan at Nagpur exhorts Christians that they have yet to become *swedeshi*!

Notions of conversions and evangelization, our mammoth institutions and the flow of funds from the West for our mission, absolutist sentiments of recent teachings (e.g. *Dominus Iesus* in which it is written that other religions are "erroneous or ambiguous opinions") all these are seen as follow up of Western civilizational imperialism in the eyes of Hindus, as the attempts of the West to perpetuate western hegemony over the Hindu culture whatever may be the theological justification of our activities of conversion at our intra-religious discussions. Assertion of Hinduvada should be therefore assessed in our historical pedigree of western colonialism and its cultural and religious infiltration into the Indian social and political psyche. Then the implied meaning of the ongoing aggressive Hindutva can be interpreted as a clash of civilizations, western and eastern.

Here the pertinent question is the form and content of a spirituality in the thick of a clash of civilizations, the ongoing conflict between Western and Indian perspectives and world views . Traditionally we think of our spirituality within the confines of a particular religious tradition, that is to say we should become 'a-hundred-percent' Christian! It implies subtly the

rejection of other religious pursuits. Today an authentic spirituality should contain the contours of the clash of cultures. What should then be the spiritual vision which gives meaning as well as harmony in our life in the present culture of crises and clashes? It should be a spirituality which conceives the present crisis context as an opportunity of an organic growth towards greater human maturity and a liberative experience. Here one has to address two questions: a vision of an inclusive spirituality and a corresponding praxis of spirituality.

5. Meaning of Spirituality

Basically spirituality is a 'vision-thing' in virtue of which we understand our life, its mission and message. Today we speak of a cybernetic spirituality of the inner-structures of psyche or the inner designs and paradigms through which we 'see' the world, in terms of perceiving, understanding and interpreting. Spirituality as vision or paradigm is a map. Map is not territory but an explanation of the territory. We need a map to move around the city. If there are mistakes in the life-map we will be lost in the lanes of life. Spirituality as vision or inner map should be all-encompassing and pervasive. It is more than a conscious code. It reaches even into our unconscious depths. We dwell in our spirituality much more than we are conscious of it, and we practice it in our sundry life more than we consciously profess it. It is the warp and woof of our life, the ambience and texture in which we see, reflect on, interpret, and ultimately respond to the depth questions of our existence. It colours our seeing, hearing, speaking, praying, beliefs, intellectual positions, life choices, moral options; it is present in what we support and affirm, what we protest and deny and in our moral options. In other words spirituality is our deepest myth that energizes our actions even without our conscious knowledge of it and informs us of our world perspectives and our values.[8]

If we approach spirituality in this comprehensive way it is the 'vision-thing' which harmonizes and synthesizes various facets and facts of life, our theology, our social and cultural life, our human relationships and duties. It is the fundamental ambience, perspective and horizon which give unity, focus and meaning to our entire life, every bit and byte of it, every second of it

[8]See, Joann Wolski Conn, ed., *Women Spirituality: Resources for Christian Development* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), p.49 ff.

whether we are awake or asleep. Even it gives clarity to the life before birth, and assurance in the life after death.

5.1. Crisis of Spirituality—Crisis in Vision.

Till now, we have been very complacent and at ease with our spirituality enshrined in the western and occidental framework of conceptual absolutism and certainty. However in the western absolutist theological statements we sense an incompetency of our 'spirituality' in the present cultural and religious pluralism. The number of 'doubting-Thomases' are rapidly increasing among us. When we are also influenced by the pluralistic values we silently raise questions like: Is Jesus only one of the religious founders; Is Christianity one of the religions along with other religions? Is it preposterous and idiotic to think that Hindus and Buddhists and Muslims have no God experience, no salvation if they are not baptized? No dogma, no magisterium can constrain this free flow of questions in a pluralistic culture.

Often we evaluate our faith in the logistics of comparison in the emerging pluralistic culture. Comparative dialectics is disastrous in one's faith life for comparative statement cannot embody a confessional faith; it will be an intellectual articulation for engaging equally valid but contradicting concepts. For example, the oft repeated utterance in interreligious dialogues 'Jesus Christ is one of the saviours' is a comparative statement to respect the prophets of other religions and to revere the sentiments of the dialogue partner. Commitment coming from such a comparative confession is always divisive and diffusive. Our witness consequently becomes very professional, academic and matter of fact; it will lack the *touch* of the 'conviction of the heart'. When comparison infiltrates into our faith consciousness then enemy is very much in our camp. We are on drifting ground. The axe has fallen on the very roots! We have to watch out!

Because of the subtle influence of the comparative pluralistic thinking, our Christian vision becomes blurred and hazy in the general Christian self-awareness. Consequently our Christian commitment apparently lacks the fire, focus and clarity compared to the earlier times. This is a very disturbing knowledge at the root of our Christian being, and a frustrating experience in our societal life, especially when Christian antagonism is on rise in the political horizon of India. Somehow we find ourselves in a 'no-where' situation or in a border-line dilemma where we cannot go either way.

This critical state of affairs can be seen as a significant crisis of paradigm shift, a shift from the habitual way of thinking and doing. The hitherto available paradigm is no longer valid but a new convincing paradigm is not yet arrived. No doubt, the solution to this present crisis is not a blind return to the past.

What we require now is a new vision to break out the present stalemate; otherwise we, as a Christian community, may become introverted and exclusive, and eventually we will be estranged from the main stream of the society. We are warned in the Book of Proverb: 'Where there is no vision people perish" (29:18).

Here we have no soft options nor an easy exit. The enemy is verily within us. To address this disillusionment of our Christian faith and commitment we Christians have to address first our 'spirituality' i.e., our very vision. All authentic changes in our lives must grow out of a change in our vision of reality. That is to say we have to urgently engage in a perception shift with regard to our faith and witness.

In the following discussion I would like to highlight certain horizons and paths which may help Christians to reconfigure their vision to reinvigorate their commitment in the present cultural and social scenario of India.. What matters is a competent vision and a living into that vision.

5.2. Towards an Inclusive Spirituality

I am quite uncomfortable with the word spirituality because we usually understand it as a spiritualism which implies a dualism between spirit and body, or heaven and earth, sin and virtue . But at the same time we know that dualism is the cornerstone of the Christian thought for millennia whose systematic articulation can be traced back to Greek idealism and Greco-Roman world view, though Descartes is considered as the father of western rationalism since Enlightenment era. From Augustine and Agustinianism through Anslem and medieval scholasticism dualisitic metaphysics became the hallmark of Western theology and spirituality.

Dualistic spirituality which permeates our lives, liturgy, prayers, ecclesial structures, etc., holds a hierarchical and patriarchal view of the sacred. In dualistic spirituality there is an inbuilt sense of "better than', "higher than" or "holier than" in opposition to the other half. We entertain

still this 'hierarchical-dualism' in our missiology, ecclesiology and even in spirituality. Our vision of reality revolves around the following opposites: the Christians and pagans; the holy church and the profane world; Christians and non-Christians; Christian world and non-Christian world. We see reality in grades, hierarchies, degrees, strata while we, as Christians, are on the top of this hierarchical structure as the sole privileged recipients of revelation.

Moreover, in a dualistic spirituality, what matters is only 'my soul' and its redemption. This body, this world and its things are evil and hence to be avoided. For this one has to engage in stringent spiritual exercises in which "I endeavour to 'save' my soul". I do charity or engage in service for the sake of ' my soul'; here community is only a pragmatic means, not an end in itself. Spirituality is an individual and private affair for 'my salvation' and is conceived of a one-to-one vertical relationship with God because 'My soul is restless until it rests in God" (St. Augustine).

The question is how long we can hold this dualistic 'Christian' vision of reality when the present emergent pluralistic culture, world politics and globalization trend to leave no space for religious isolationism or authoritarian absolutism. It is high time that we explore the possibility of a radical re-grounding of our spirituality, or a 'revolution of consciousness'. Here we have to engage collectively in an earnest search for a genuine "gestalt shift in the whole way of seeing our relations to one another so that our behaviour patterns are reformed from the inside out."[9] It is no easy task. It demands a rethinking of everything that perpetuates dualism in its divisiveness, elitism, isolationism and exclusivity.

If we bracket out all our theological presumptions and articulations of our spirituality for the time being, our common sense knowledge whispers to us that spirituality should primarily be the blossoming of life. Or, rather an experiment with *truth* of life as Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation, has approached life. Here truth is not understood as a static concept but a dynamic 'process' and ever unfolding reality. The Greek word for truth is *alatheia* which means 'un-fold' or "manifest".

[9]Beatrice Bruteau, "Neo-Feminism and the Next Revolution of Consciousness," *Anima* 3/2(Spring 1977):1

Life is an ever-unfolding process towards greater unity and wholeness in which both the spirit and body, individual and community, heaven and earth are two integral poles vibrantly and vitally interfaced. Spirituality as a life process is a constant pilgrimage of probing, not proving, and of discovering not concluding. Life is on move for it is 'not-yet' till 'God may be all in all (1Cor 15:28). In this movement there is no room for dualism between matter and spirit, death and life, earth and heaven because the mystery of reality is unveiled in the process of integration in the integrity and unicity of Reality. To phrase it differently, spirituality is to be seen as a total reconciliation and harmony of reality, in which not a speck nor a shred of this manifested world, the history and cultures and the religious pursuits of humankind, and achievements and failures is excluded. That is to say spirituality means fullness of life and its blossoming in day to day life in the given socio-cultural context.

5.3. Inclusive Spirituality as Holistic Vision

Responsive to the present trends and developments, re-grounding our spirituality within the ecological and holistic perspective will be the right step to build up a Christian spirituality to take on the challenges and signs of the time. In today's historical moment, I think, Christian spirituality in its dualistic construct has reached a cultural as well as theological limit-situation. As Heidegger tells us, our future, paradoxically, comes towards us out of our past. It seems that the present call to wholeness is a radical return to roots of our Biblical faith.

Inclusive wholeness has been th e texture of Jesus' *basileia* vision and the praxis of his Kingdom ministry. Jesus' vision and ministry has been a thorough prophetic critique on the prevalent remnant theology of God's holy people, which defined holiness in cultic terms. Jesus has redefined holiness in terms of wholeness intended in creation. In his mission there is no division between the sacred and the profane, the saint and sinners, the rich and the poor, woman and man, the chosen and non-elect'. To make his all-inclusiveness forthright and explicit he allowed a methodology of a preferential association with the victimized and the poor. Thus he consistently challenged the contemporary attitudes, practices and structures which restricted or excluded potential members of the Israelite community. The poignancy of his message has become provoking, when tax-collectors and

prostitutes are praised by him as models to emulate, since they heed his call to the Kingdom vision. (Lk.17: 1-5; Mt.9.9).

The call is an act of grace, restoration of fellowship, the beginning of a new life in a new dispensation of love and reconciliation for all. The amazing aspect of Jesus' inclusive ministry is that it embraces both the poor and the rich, the oppressed and the oppressor, the sinners and the devout. Through and through Jesus' mission has been one of dissolving alienation and breaking down the walls of hostility, of crossing boundaries between individuals and groups. As God forgives us gratuitously, we are to forgive those who wrong us up to seventy times seven times—limitlessly. Thus we can say that actualization of Jesus' basileia vision is not the cultic meal but the festive table of a royal banquet or wedding feast. For him 'holiness' of the Temple and Thorah is not the locus of God's power and presence[10] but the new order of God's reign anchored in love and justice, in which "there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all." (Col 3:11).

But this God's reign is simultaneously a present and future reality (Mk.1:15; Mt.4:17). It is in fact "upon" his listeners (Mt 12:28) and "within you" (Lk 17:21) but at the same time it is not consummated. Through and through the New Testament, there underlies an unresolved tension between the 'already' and 'not-yet' of God's reign. This tension is that of growth. The collection of parables, entitled "growth parables" in Mt 13 and Mk 4 point to the organic nature of Kingdom[11].

The Kingdom of God as wholeness *(Pleroma),* therefore, is not a static concept but an ever transpiring event here and now, which extends to the eschatological era. The Christian understanding of wholeness (Pleroma) is thus an organic process in which God and humans are covenantal partners, and have to endeavour for it hand in hand. The zenith of the process of realization of the Kingdom is when Jesus finally delivers the Kingdom to God the Father who becomes *all in all.* (1Cor 15:28).

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[10]Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 113.

[11]They are 'the sower', 'the growing corn', 'the double parable of mustard seed and the leaven', 'weeds among the wheat' and 'the net full of fish'.

Undoubtedly, the vision permeating the Bible is of wholeness. The whole economy of salvation is a movement towards greater reconciliation and deeper communion of beings. This momentum is initiated in the mystery of incarnation and it will continue till it consummates in God. It means that the totality of reality, the world and its joys and sorrows, hopes and despairs are the very arena as well as medium of God's redemptive activity (*Gaudium et Spes* #4). Here there is no space for dualism because in this holistic paradigm reality is a web of relation and an interdependent existence.

The *Pleroma* as the final blossoming of the Kingdom of God is the communion of beings in love and fellowship which is rooted in "righteousness"—right relations, the bedrock of peace and the realm of joy (Rom. 14:17). It is a milieu of total reconciliation and restoration of all relationship in justice and peace. In Isaiah there is a beautiful portrayal of *Pleroma* as total communion of beings in a fellowship of harmony and happiness. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The sucking child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den" (Is.11:6-8).

This holistic vision is quite profound in all religious traditions. For example in Hinduism, *Pūrnam* (Fullness) is understood as the Transcendent and Immanent Fullness of the Supreme Reality; it is 'one whole' (*paripūrna*) *idam* and *adah*, here and beyond, it is simultaneously manifest and unmanifest.[12] In the Buddhist tradition, *Sūnya* (Void) the absoluteness is also the Absolute Fullness, the *Source* of all life and creativity; it is the fulcrum, 'the nave of the wheel' that holds the phenomenal world together in harmony and order. Especially Mahayana Buddhism insists on the interdependence of all life especially in Bodhisattva ideal and the doctrine of *parivarta* (the merit one attains while one accomplishes a good deed is shared by all sentient beings).

Even our tribal religions emphasise on the interdependence of humans and cosmos which together form the community consciousness. A tribal, right

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[12]See *Īśa Upanishad* 'Peace Invoçation'

from the birth, learns to believe that 'I am because I belong'[13]. Hence the core of tribal spirituality is corporate identity. Owing to this profound community consciousness theirs is a very egalitarian society without any hierarchy or dualism. The whole emphasis is on the wholeness of the community. Even in the Quantum physics reality is interpreted as a web of relations. The quantum out there is not existing in a neutral, 'no-where' situation but in an inherent "Implicate Order" or "Enfolded Order" (David Bohm) which is an "Intelligent Design" of interconnectivity of the whole world, of which both 'subject' and 'object' are the inviolable twin poles in their relationality. Hence Reality is ultimately Relation![14]

What I am arguing for is that Jesus' vision as well as the core vision of world religions, including the Modern physics is very much holistic and inclusive, and emphasize the wholeness of reality in their inter-dependence or rather inter-independence. That is to say there is a passion for wholeness in the movement of reality. Christian vision of spirituality has to recover and revitalize its forgotten holistic vision to brace up the present challenge of fundamentalism. In this kairos of change rigidity and inflexibility will lead the church to ultimate crisis. According to the historian Toynbee, civilizations tend to lose their steam and begin to decline once they reach a peak of vitality. The loss of flexibility is the core reason of this cultural breakdown. Society can no longer adapt to changing situations if it is very rigid and absolute in its positions, and will, in the process, be alienated from the creative process of cultural evolution. It will break down and eventually disintegrate.[15] Whereas the growing civilizations display endless variety and versatility, those in the process of disintegration show uniformity and lack of inventiveness. The western Church, both Catholic and Protestant has not yet shown emphatic signs of a departure from its dualistic vision. I think, we Indian Christians have an edge over our Christian brothers and sisters of the Western hemisphere to initiate a momentum toward a holistic vision because we are born and brought up in a pluralistic culture and our fidelity to Jesus and his vision demands us such a pioneering task in our cultural milieu. Here

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[13]See Chidis Denis Isizoh, "Reflection on Tribal Values," *Indian Journal of Spirituality* 11/1(1998): 123-124.

[14]See Frithof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (Shambhala: New Science Library, 1985).

[15]See Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 89ff.

the crucial question is the point of departure of such a new spirituality. It seems to me that joining with peoples' struggle for liberation will offer a veritable spectrum for the praxis of holistic spirituality.

6. Spirituality as Joining with Peoples' Struggles

The holistic vision of Christian spirituality becomes academics or meta-cosmic occult concept if it is not translated into a sociological process. A holistic spirituality becomes honest only in terms of peoples' issues and concerns which offer a common platform for all traditions to work together and strive together. Here there is no room for fundamentalism precisely because human sufferings have no religion, and there is harmony and unity of hearts and will in human agony and sorrow. In such a context, the very praxis becomes the hermeneutical principle in forming our spirituality and religiosity. Indeed the norm of this spirituality is the *Paschal* fidelity to and *praxis* of the *reality*.

The real reality of India is her teeming millions who are poor despised, excluded, oppressed in the name of religion, caste, creed, sex. About half of our people live under poverty line and more than half of our population are illiterate. Our women are the most oppressed and marginalized both at home and in the public life. Dowry murders are only too common. One sixth of the population are untouchable and denied of bare minimum human dignity. We have the most miserable slums in cities like Delhi Calcutta, and Bombay. Our labour forces are the most exploited, and Globalization has made India a trans-territorial colony of MNCs and TNCs. Amidst these deteriorating social, political and economic situation masses of the people are struggling to survive, to find work, to feed the children and to retain minimum dignity and freedom. In India the practice of and fidelity to *reality* should be an engagement in the 'paschal' journey of the poor, exclusive of which spirituality embodies no conviction and no authenticity.

The praxis of holistic spirituality, then, is by joining with peoples in their struggle for justice. In the past our spirituality was practiced in the models of "charity", "development" or "social work" but these have become incompetent to challenge the anti-Kingdom strategies of market economy which perpetuate poverty in invincible structures and dynamics. It is in this context that we have to find the meaning and relevance of the present counter cultural movements in our spirituality.

As sociologists would say, the present monolithic and oppressive economic-political systems can only be challenged by peoples' participation in the decision process and in the control of the system that governs their lives. This will contribute a human touch and a caring approach to the present profit oriented system. This strategy can be pioneered by small groups of people who challenge the policies and put forward alternatives. These are called parallel practices which intend to create a parallel social space within the domains of social life constantly contesting the existing dominant oppressive values in order to finally replace or reform them with new ones.

Social movements, peoples' movement, popular culture, and everyday resistance are considered as parallel practices in the social science. These movements are non-institutional collective response to an oppressed situation for establishing a new order of life through a collective mobilization based on an ideology[16]. These various movements outside the main-stream conventional struggles for social justice, eco-justice etc. are collectively known as Subaltern Movements or Peoples' Movement. Perhaps the only hope in today's India is that forces for social transformation will spring from below ...from the enlightened and committed individuals, action groups, new social movements and class organizations...The main or only hope of reshaping India lies in locating power among the people themselves.[17]

There are many such peoples' movement in India in various fields like, peasant struggles, agrarian rebellions, industrial workers' struggles, tribal unrest, fish workers' resistance, Dalit revolts, student rebellions, women upsurge. In general they are the uprising of the poor and the environmental battles. To name some very vibrant movements: "Farmers' Resistance movements", "Indian National Farmers' Movement", "Fisher-folk Movement", "Labours' Resistance Movements", "New Social Movements", "Dalit Movements", "Chipko Movement", "Tribal Movement".

To counter the fundamentalist trends in all religions, including Christianity we have to develop a spirituality of peoples' struggles. In this

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[16]See J. Desrochers, *Social Movements: Towards a Perspective* (Bangalore: Centrefor Social Action, 1991); G.Shah, "The Human Rights Movement in Indian: A Critical Overview," *Social Action* 40(1990): 2ff.

[17]Rajni Kothari, *In Search of Human Governance* (Delhi: Ajanta Publishers,1998), 49 -53.

spirituality there is no 'religion' but a faith in the creative energy of Dabar present in all liberative endeavours.

A religion becomes fundamentalist when it is devoid of spirituality. A spirituality which is not concerned with the suffering lot is fake. Today, many of liberative movements like "Fisher-Folk Movement", "Dalit revolts" are pioneered by priests and sisters who work at the grass root level without any "conversion" intent. They are simply with these suffering poor because of their faith in the Gospel. A perceptive mind can infer that behind every movement for liberation of the oppressed in India is some Christian instigator.[18] What we find here is a spirituality of *Christian life* lived out through the struggles and sufferings of the poor.

If a spirituality is fashioned in a faith response to the concerns and challenges of the society it is sufficient unto itself; it doesn't need any sanction or mandate from outside; it is justified in virtue of itself. Above all it should not have any aims of covert or overt "conversion." In this praxis of spirituality we are verily participating in the mission of Jesus and our presence among people is like salt or light. Salt becomes really "salt" only when it gives taste to the meal, when we do not notice its presence or absence. Salt is irritatingly noticeable only when it makes its presence felt. When our spirituality overwhelms its presence through its massive social projects, it fails to live up to the call of Jesus: You are the salt of the earth (Mt. 5:13). Jesus has also said that You are light of the world (Mt 5:14). Light makes us see the world, the people; it gives orientation; it does not push and force; it gives us freedom, assurance and grace. These symbols which Jesus has himself given us should be the dynamic of the liberative spirituality by the "little flock" in India.

7. Peoples' Spirituality, Journeying with the *Religious Other*

The Spectrum of Indian reality is an elliptic circle having two centers- *the religious other* and *the suffering other.* Competitiveness of our spirituality depends on how we engage with the challenge of the *many poor*

[18]Roger E. Hedlund, Indian Christians of Indigenous Origin and Their Solidarity with Original Groups, in *Religion and Politics from Subaltern Perspective,* ed. Thomas Kadankavil (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1999), 26.

and the *many religions* simultaneously and together because of their hermeneutical link.

That is to say, the liberative spirituality will not work for India's poor unless it is couched in and inspired by the symbols and beliefs of their own religious world. Often our inculturation theology ignores the soteriological nucleus or the prophetico-political resources of other religions. In the name of inculturation the symbols of other religions are emptied of their soteriological content and employed in our theology and prayer. Interreligious dialogue that does not come out of an experience of human suffering, and does not explore liberative message of all religions, is a betrayal of religions. *Redemptoris Missio* proclaims that dialogue should help us to "build a society which is just and fraternal" (no.57); hence it is Apart of the Church's evangelizing mission (no. 55).

Since the core of Indian culture is religious there will not be social revolutions unless the liberative potentials of religiosity of the masses are not explored and applied. The *Bhakti* movement and freedom movement steered by Gandhi are clear examples of the liberative dimension of Indian religiosity.[19] However liberation theology in India cannot be Christian or Buddhist or Hindu for the Sacred Scriptures are often used to sustain class - caste discrimination. Then it would have to be interreligious option; adherents of different religious traditions have to search together the prophetic resources of their respective Scriptures and a net-working is an imperative for sustained liberative struggles. "Dialogue is not authentic unless it leads to reinterpretation or rejection of all oppressive aspects of the religious heritage of both partners."[20] Therefore in a liberative dialogue the 'hermeneutical priority of the oppressed' has to be constitutive.[21] As Wilfred Felix observes "any liberating dialogue has to settle score with the religious experience of the marginalized... Liberating dialogue is possible only among the victims in the various religious traditions of India..... The victims themselves are the

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[19]Xavier Irudayaraj, ed. *Liberation and Dialogue* (Bangalore: Claretian Publications, 1989), 120.

[20]Samuel Rayan, "Spirituality for Inter-Faith Social Action", in Xavier Irudayaraj, ed. *Liberation and Dialogue* (Bangalore: Claretian Publications, 1989), 70.

[21]Paul F. Knitter, *One Earth and Many Religions* (New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 163.

active subjects of liberating dialogue."[22] For inculturation of theology and spirituality, what we need, are primarily "base human communities" in which Christians and Hindus and Muslim collaborate in the praxis of liberation. In that way they can build up a new understanding and mutual approval ever more deeply and engagingly.

Throughout India, there are now numerous interreligious fellowship in a liberative vision and action plan, and these have silently become forums of real inculturation of Gospel values and vision in real life situations. These fellowships are variously called: 'Action Groups', 'Liberation Groups', 'Grass-root Communities', 'Basic (Christian) Communities', 'Counter Cultural Communities', 'Village Ashrams', 'Khadi Ashrams', 'Rural Centers', 'Inter-Faith Centers', 'Tribal Ashram', 'Basic Gandhian Communities' and so on. These groups basically seek to liberate people from exploitation and bring about socio-economic changes in the society among the ordinary people incorporating their religiousness.

Look at the objectives of BGC, for example: i. Foster Fraternity among people of different faiths and understanding of each other. ii. Celebrate all religious and national festivals jointly by people of all communities and faiths. iii. Prevent events that tend to disturb religious tolerance and take active steps to avert communal clashes. iv. Achieve social justice by actively devising constructive approaches to social problems.[23]

These base communities of 'commoners', through the Gandhian vision, show a veritable "way of bringing interreligious and inter-ideological dialogue down from arm chair experts to people at the grass roots."[24] Like

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[22]Wilfred Felix, Liberating Dialogue in India, The German translation in *Befreiender Dialog-Befreite Gesellschaft: Politische Theologie und Begegnung der Religionen in Indien und Europa*. Ed. Sybille Frish-Oppermann (Loccum: Evangelische Akademie, 1994), 37.

[23]A. Tibursius, "Fifth Annual Report of the Interreligious Fellowship Society", Manavalakurichi, Kanyakumari, 1991, 1. Non-published document; quoted in Knitter, One Earth and Many Religions, 171.

[24]N. Palerasu, Gandhian Grass-root Communities, 1991. Non-published project description formulated in October, 1991. Quoted in Knitter, 171

the BGC there are a number Grass-root groups pioneered by priests, nuns and lay person throughout India.[25]

A grass-root community is a living, real, concrete human community brought together in the perspective of God's Kingdom. They are symbolized in the very 'foundational' act of the church according to the tradition. There the Spirit may not speak one uniform 'sacred' language or a liturgical text, but does speak the innumerable dialects of the people! In the past (today as well) Christian witness has been circumscribed by a kind of "compound mentality of the organization". Now a paradigm shift in Christian witness is taking place from the "ecclesiocentric mission" to "the marketplace of the struggle of the peoples", a "congregation" to "pilgrims in dialogue". The Unity of the Churches represented by the enormous diversity of the grass-root communities is neither cultural nor linguistic nor jurisdictional one (*dictio unius juris*); it is the unity of the Spirit whom we should not grieve by not trusting.[26] In these basic communities which are on the periphery of official Church, authentically 'local' church and valid theologies of liberation are conceived as twins in the same womb of praxis[27] offering a peoples' spirituality that is liberative as well as inculturational of the Gospel.

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[25]To name some: a set of liberation groups who are called "Programme for Community Organization" (PCO) and another "Beach Blossoms" (BB) *Ayalkāttam* (Neighbourhood-Fellowship) are quite involved among these exploited fisher-folk in Kerala coast, South India, See D. Pankajakshan, *Puthiyalokam, Puthiyavazhi* [Malayalam langugaure, it means New Word and New Way} (Kanjippadam, Kerala: 1989). *Deena Seva Dal* , a group of priests and nuns among the Santal tribals in Hazaribagh, Bihar. See A. Fellce c.s.s.t., The Role of Liberation Groups with the Church, in D.S. Amalorpavadass, ed., *A New Society* (Bangalore: NBCLC), 469-281. G. Prove s.c.m.m., Small Communities in Kerala, Sedos no.4(1981):74-76. The theme of *Religion and Society* vol.31, no. 2(1984) is Social Action Groups and the Churches in India.; K.Naeke, Evangelization among the Santals in Hazaribagh, *Sevarthan* (Ranchi: St. Albert's College Annual, 1972) 117-121. See Joseph Prasad Pinto o.f.m Cap., *Inculturation through Basic Communities, An Indian Perspective* (Bangalore: ATC, 1985), 223-226.

[26]R. Panikkar, The Dream of an Indian Ecclesiology in Gewin van Leeuwen, ed., Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology (Bangalore: ATC, 1984), 50

[27]Aloysius Pieris, A Theology of Liberation in Asian Churches?, 18. See also, A. Pieris, "Towards an Asian Theology of Liberation: Some Religio-Cultural Guidelines," Vidyajyoti 43(1979):261-284. The entire gamut of the areas of inculturation is succinctly summed up in the 1974 Statement of the Asian Bishops: The local Church is a Church incarnate in a people, a Church indigenous and inculturated. And this means concretely a

Conclusion

A holistic spirituality implies the wholeness of reality. This wholeness is not an impersonal mass but a web of inter-dependent or inter-independent relations. Then there is unicity and diversity in the wholeness. It is unity in diversity and diversity in unity. Unity and diversity are not in opposition but in ever vibrant interface of creativity. Unity 'breaks into' (*incarnates into*) diversity, and diversity 'returns' (*resurrects to*) into unity. It is the Christic mystery ("Jesus comes from the Father and goes to the Father"). That is to say, wholeness is not a static datum or concept but a creative ever evolving and unfolding reality. Holistic spirituality is the participation of our being and having in the movement of reality towards its total reconciliation and harmony. Jesus has given momentum to this movement through his Kingdom ministry of righteousness, peace and joy(Rom 14:17). This process of reconciliation is a verily liberative struggle of the poor and the marginalised for there is no holiness in wholeness where there is oppression and exploitation. The present crisis of spirituality can be overcome through our joining with the poor in their struggles of justice. This was Jesus' way. This was his spirituality. We Christians have to rediscover Jesus' people oriented spirituality centred on their concerns and dreams. This is how Jesus took on fundamentalism of his day by horns. Neither do we have any other but this *way* of Jesus!

Church in continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, the cultures, the religions- in brief, with all the life realities of the people in whose midst it has sunk its roots deeply and whose history and life it gladly makes its own. [*Statement of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference* (April 1974), 20-21.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN WORLD RELIGIONS AND GLOBAL THEOLOGY

Kazimierz Kondrat♦

Dialogue between great world religions (I mean Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism) is nowadays inevitable. The growing possibility of direct communication with people of different world-views, beliefs, customs and practices, seems to be one of the main factors to impose the need of inter-religious and inter-cultural conversation on those who really want not only to understand adherents of different faiths and world-views but also to determine their own attitude towards them. One of the more remarkable and influential, but to some extent controversial, attempts in recent three decades at elaborating the idea of dialogue is that made by some modern British and American philosophers, theologians and comparative historians of religion. Among others they are: Wilfred Cantwell Smith, John Hick, Gordon D. Kaufman, Langdon Gilkey, Paul F. Knitter, Stanley J. Samartha, Alan Race, Julius Lipner, Raimundo Panikkar, Keith Ward, Leonard Swidler, John S. O'Leary, Franklin I. Gamwell and Robert Cummings Neville. This paper is to examine critically: 1) The concept and types of dialogue; 2) Ideological grounds of dialogue and 3) The idea of global theology.

1. The concept and types of dialogue

The notion of dialogue is an ambiguous one, and therefore potentially confusing. The word itself conceals a variety of presuppositions and attitudes, which can result in a lack of clarity about the aims and direction of dialogue proper. In the most general sensse inter-religious dialogue" (gr. *dialegein* „converse, talk'') is written or spoken exchange of thoughts concerning religious themes and problems involved in them with representatives of at least two different religions. Religions may be represented officially or informally by individuals or groups of persons taking part in mutual exchange of views.

Some of the philosophers and theologians of religion, mentioned above, classify religious dialogue in different manners. In principle we can distinguish two fundamental criteria of that division: on the one hand, in a

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manner that depends upon the subject of dialogue, and on the other, according to the purpose of dialogue. E. J. Sharpe has noted four distinct types of dialogue: a) human dialogue, b) interior dialogue, c) discursive dialogue and d) secular dialogue. The first type consists in the endeavour to appreciate the other person of faith who professes an allegiance different from one's own. The second lies in the desire to explore the intuitive recognition of a shared experience of the divine. The third is the search for ways in which the truth claims of different faiths may be viewed as complementary and not conflicting. The fourth arises from the need to collaborate in working towards solving practical problems in the building up of world community.[1]

J. Lipner distinguishes „reduction dialogue'' from „committal dialogue''. A person involved in the reduction dialogue „tends to reduce conflicting religious claims by a process of what he calls 'demythologizing' i.e. emptying the otherwise irreducible facticity of such beliefs, of literal content, and supplanting them with unitive insights which have only 'mythologically' or 'poetically' been expressed by these overtly factual statements''.[2] That sort of dialogue implies that religious claims have no hard-core universal factual value, but only derive meaning for believers within the confines of a particular socio-cultural milieu in which they have their origin and development. In the committal dialogue each participant, after due analysis, may find it necessary to retain some measure of literality in the content of his religious beliefs.[3] In this case, according to Lipner, the sincere dialogist, encouraged by the experience of 'believing religiously' that he and his counterpart share, or in appropriate circumstances, by the experience of sharing unitive contents of religious beliefs, seeks to analyse and clarify the substance of different truth-claims. Lipner emphasizes that where truth-claims conflict, sharpening the focus of their factual content makes for much progres in unitive understanding.

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[1]E. J. Sharpe, 'The Goals of Inter-Religious Dialogue', in J. Hick (ed.), *Truth and Dialogue. The Relationship between World Religions*, London: Sheldon Press, 1974, p. 77ff.

[2]J. Lipner, 'Truth-Claims and Inter-Religious Dialogue', *Religious Studies* 12 (1976), p. 227.

[3]*Ibid.*

He concludes that the purpose of dialogue today will be best fulfilled when participants redefine the limits and areas of facticity in their traditional truth-claims by clearing away as lucidly as possible the tangled undergrowth of hitherto sacrosanct and untouched 'factual truths', and seeking new insights of convergent understanding in the reinterpretation of these 'facts'.[4]

Another classification is that suggested by J. Hick. He distinguishes „the confesional'' from „the truth-seeking stance'' in interfaith dialogue.[5] In confessional dialogue, everyone is convinced that only her own faith has truth or absolute truth while all others have no or only relative truth. One enters interfaith dialogue only in order to induce a change of beliefs in others. In truth-seeking dialogue, however, „each is conscious that the Transcendent Being is infinitely greater than his own limited vision of it (...) and they accordingly seek to share their visions in the hope that each may be helped towards a fuller awareness of the Divine Reality before which they both stand''.[6] It follows from the above that in truth-seeking stance everything is subject to the unique logic of dialogue except people's common desire to have the fuller vision of the same Reality, which, according to Hick, is the underlying condition of interfaith dialogue. Through such interfaith dialogue, different religions can be mutually criticized, enriched, and transformed. The result of that, Hick claims, „may well be a growing world ecumenism, in which the common commitment of faith in a higher spiritual Reality which demands brotherhood on earth will seem more and more significant, while the differences between the religious traditions will seem proportionately less significant''.[7]

2. Ideological grounds of dialogue

In philosophical and theological literature concerning the problem of dialogue between world religions one can distinguish three classes of premises which the thinkers mentioned above take as the ground of

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[4] *Ibid.*, p. 229-230.

[5] J. Hick, *God Has Many Names*, London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1980, p. 89.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 81.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

justification while involving in inter-religious dialogue. They are: 1) theological premises, 2) ethical premises and 3) universal ideas. Pragmatical reasons refering to specified activity in the world are considerably based on theological and universal premises. Our main task here is to present reasons for engaging in inter-religious dialogue put forward by modern British and American philosophers and theologians of religion. We do not take up how the matter of dialogue (its purpose and justification) is dealt with from world religions' point of view. Theological premises and universal ideas justify why one should undertake dialogue; ethical reasons determine the way it has to be carried out.

Theological premises are founded on certain ideas derived from religion and then rationally modified. The following ones seem to be of much importance:

1) Great world religions are equal in the concept of revelation, soteriology, the idea of sainthood, religious experience etc. Hence a practical rule is to treat them on equal terms (J. Hick, W. C. Smith).[8]

2) Different religions are partial expressions of the same Transcendent Reality. Hence the aim of interfaith dialogue is to enable all religions to better express this common Reality and to learn from each other in order to obtain the best possible response to the Reality (W. C. Smith, J. Hick, G. Kaufman, L. Gilkey, S. J. Samartha).[9]

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[8]J. Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, London: Macmillan, 1973, p. 120-132; J. Hick, *God Has Many Names*, op. cit., p. 48-53; W. C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion: A Revolutionary Approach to the Great Religious Traditions*, London: Sheldon Press, 1978, p. 170-192.

[9]W. C. Smith, 'Idolatry in Comparative Perspective', in J. Hick, P. Knitter (eds), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness. Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1987, p. 62-64; J. Hick, *Problems of Religious Pluralism*, London: Macmillan, 1985, p. 68-69; J. Hick, *Disputed Questions in Theology and the Philosophy of Religion*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993, p. 21, 94; G. Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery: A Constructive Theology*, Cambridge, MA & London, UK: Harvard University Press, 1993, p. 39ff; L. Gilkey, 'Plurality and Its Theological Implications', in J. Hick, P. Knitter (eds), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, op. cit., p. 41; S. J. Samartha, 'The Cross and the Rainbow. Christ in

3) No religion possesses absolute or final truth. Hence an epistemological rule is to seek the truth in mutual dialogue - the truth that could be accepted by all religions (ecumenical model of religious truth) (P. Knitter, G. Kaufman, L. Gilkey, A. Race, W. C. Smith, J. S. O'Leary).[10]

4) There is no universal position available to us to evaluate the essence of different religions. Every religious (or secular) understanding (symbols, ideas, doctrines) and way of life is a particular one, that has grown up in a particular history, makes particular claims, is accompanied by particular practicies and injunctions, and hence is to be distinguished from all other particular religious and secular orientations. So, if we want to enter into dialogue successfully with others of quite different commitments and convictions, we must find ways of relativizing and opening up our basic symbol system (G. Kaufman).[11]

5) Nowadays we have entered into a period in which we must speak of a common religious history of humankind. Hence a practical rule is that we now have to think on global scale of what men and women everywhere have to learn from all the religious traditions since each of them has its significant contribution to spiritual transformation of man (W. C. Smith, J. Hick).[12]

Multireligious Culture', in J. Hick, P. Knitter (eds), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, op. cit., p. 76-77.

[10]P. Knitter, *No Other Name?: A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985, p. 32, 219; G. Kaufman, 'Religious Diversity, Historical Consciousness, and Christian Theology', in J. Hick, P. Knitter (eds), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, op. cit., p. 13; L. Gilkey, 'Plurality and Its Theological Implications', op. cit., p. 43, 49; A. Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983, p. 72, 77f.; W. C. Smith, 'Idolatry in Comparative Perspective', op. cit., p. 65-66; J. S. O'Leary, *Religious Pluralism and Christian Truth*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996, p.23-24.

[11]G. Kaufman, 'Religious Diversity, Historical Consciousness, and Christian Theology', op. cit., p. 5ff.

[12]W. C. Smith, *Towards a World Theology: Faith and the Comparative History of Religions*, London: Macmillan, 1981, p. 131-132, 141-143; J. Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent*, London: Macmillan, 1989, p. 300-303.

6) Different religions are regarded as different in their fundamentals. Hence interfaith dialogue is necessary for different religions to clearly realize these fundamental differences so that they can tolerate each other (S. M. Heim, K. Surin, G. D'Costa, J. A. DiNoia).[13]

7) The main purpose of dialogue today: much progress in unitive understanding, will be best fulfilled when participants redefine the limits and areas of facticity in their traditional truth-claims. It means, on the one hand, clearing away as lucidly as possible the untouched factual truths, and on the other, seeking new insights of convergent understanding in the reinterpretation of these facts (J. Lipner, K. Cragg).[14]

The second class of premises founded on certain ideas and values consists, among others, of:

1) The basic patterns and frameworks of great religious traditions that have been created by humankind in its long history which can provide genuine guidance with respect to the problems we today confront. They are considered to help bring peace in our time and build community with others (G. Kaufman).[15]

2) The fundamental values of persons and of their rights to freedom, justice being treated on equal terms (L. Gilkey).[16]

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[13]S. M. Heim, *Is Christ the Only Way?*, Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1985, p. 25-30; see also his 'The Pluralistic Hypothesis, Realism, and Post-eschatology', *Religious Studies*, 25 (1992), p. 211-216; K. Surin, 'A „Politics of Speech'': Religious Pluralism in the Age of the McDonald's Hamburger', in G. D'Costa (ed.), *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of Pluralistic Theology of Religion*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990, p. 192-212; J. A. DiNoia, 'Varieties of Religious Aims: Beyond Exclusivism, Inclusivism, and Pluralism', in Bruce D. Marshal (ed.), *Theology and Dialogue: Essays in Conversation with George Lindbeck*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990, p. 249-274.

[14]J. Lipner, 'Truth-Claims and Inter-Religious Dialogue', op. cit., p. 230; K. Cragg, *Muhammad and the Christian*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1984.

[15]G. Kaufman, 'Religious Diversity, Historical Consciousness, and Christian Theology', op. cit., p. 13-14; see also his *Theology for a Nuclear Age*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985, ch. 1-3.

[16]L. Gilkey, 'Plurality and Its Theological Implications', op. cit., p. 45ff.

3) Religious tolerance without competition; reconciliation of great world religions without breaching their religious essence. The primary goal of interfaith dialogue is today to lay bare the fundamental differences between different religions so that people of different faiths can realize that they are seekers after different things rather than competitors for the same thing. Such a realization makes it possible for different religions to tolerate each other (S. M. Heim, G. Lindbeck).[17]

4) Preferential option for the poor and the oppressed as the soteriocentric criterion for religious dialogue (P. Knitter).[18]

Ethical premises constitute, among others, the following injunctions:

1) Members of the different religions of the world ough to show mutual respect and understanding, and to learn more and more from one another (G. Parrinder).[19]

2) We live now in a single interconnected and interdependent world, so it is no longer possible to ignore the other ways of being human or to move toward eliminating them. We must learn instead to encounter other religious traditions on equal terms, seeking, as sympathetically as we can, to understand and appreciate both their insights into the human condition and the forms of belief and practice they recommend and inculcate (G. Kaufman, J. Hick, P. Knitter).[20]

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[17]S. M. Heim, *Is Christ the Only Way*, op. cit., p. 141, 150f.; G. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984, p. 18.

[18]P. Knitter, 'Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions', in J. Hick, P. Knitter (eds), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, op. cit., p. 193.

[19]G. Parrinder, *Encountering World Religions*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987, p. 221, 226n.

[20]G. Kaufman, 'Religious Diversity, Historical Consciousness, and Christian Theology', op. cit., p. 4; J. Hick, 'The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity', in J. Hick, P. Knitter (eds), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, op. cit., p. 16-18; P. Knitter, 'Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions', op. cit., p. 194.

3) One ought to set one's free from moves toward authoritarianism in relation to other religions (G. Kaufman, S. J. Samartha).[21]

The problem of inter-religious dialogue includes some questions of much importance: 1) who is to carry on inter-religious dialogue?; 2) on what conditions and grounds?; 3) what manner? and 4) for what purpose? The question of conditions and grounds of inter-religious dialogue and of its purposes as well seems to be the most controversial. The British and American philosophers and theologians of religion share different opinions on how to solve the problem. We can distinguish three main stances to be determined conventionally as 1) revisionist universalism; 2) preservative particularism and 3) communicative (dialogical) pluralism.[22]

Revisionist universalism takes it for granted that great world religions are in principle eqivalent. Hence it is necessary to build up overreligious and overconfessional grounds in the form of hypotheses or statements to explain not only plurality and variety of religions but also to determine the purpose and sense of dialogue between them. Accepting of the stance results in the reductionist interpretation of religious beliefs and doctrines (it refers in more or less degree to every religion). Clearing away the literal content of religious truths or replacing it by the mythological one makes it possible to come to a hard to determine common denominator on a high general level.

Preservative particularism maintains that there is no common measure for different religions since they are immutable in their fundamental beliefs, independent of each other and immune to any attempt of unification. Thus the main goal of dialogue except for increase in religious knowledge may be conversion from one religion into another or better understanding the others while remaining one's own religious beliefs, or rediscovering a lost element in one's own tradition.

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[21]G. Kaufman, 'Religious Diversity, Historical Consciousness, and Christian Theology', op. cit., p. 12-13; S. J. Samartha, 'The Cross and the Rainbow. Christ in Multireligious Culture', op. cit., p. 79-82.

[22]See Y. Huang, 'Religious pluralism and interfaith dialogue: Beyond universalism and particularism', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 37 (1995), p. 137-140 and note 56.

The third approach assumes that unique and incommensurable religious truths, as well as those being capable of comparing, the acts of communicating them to another believers together with learning from them what they consider to be true, all that has to be subjected to the logic of interfaith dialogue. The logic emphasizes that through interfaith dialogue the elements of two different religions are fused with and transformed by each other but remain different.[23] Within this stance we can also choose another path suggested by J. Lipner namely, regarding dissimilarity and incommensurability of religious truths, to seek certain ideas on different levels of generality to be accepted by both parts of dialogue.

Another alternative, call it anthropological and universalistic, can be put forward, notwithstanding. If we assume as true that religion in its deepest essence serves first of all the man, his redemption, enlightment, liberation or fulfilment, and it means that the matter is the moral and spiritual progress of human being, the question to be raised is which of the living religions (or what elements involved into great world's religions) warrants the best possible conditions to realize the idea on individual and social level as well. The problem, however, is that great world religions include in more or less degree divergent concepts of the man. None the less, it seems that the problem can be partly overcome by discerning universal contents in different religions concerning human nature.

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[23]This approach in inter-religious dialogue is put forward by Yong Huang who argues that „accepting something from an alien religion as meaningful and true, one judges about meaningfulness and truth not in the light of alien religion but in her own light. Thus, what is taken from one religion and is woven into the belief system of another often takes on a very different meaning and plays a very different role in its new incarnations'' ('Religious pluralism and interfaith dialogue...', op. cit., p. 139). Huang seems to accept partly the view of David Tracy that in inter-religious dialogue every one is obliged to tell his partners what he believes is true, hoping that it may also be true for them. At the same time, one is also ready to accept from his partners whatever is true to him and weave it coherently into his own web of beliefs (see D. Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion Hope*, San Francicso: Harper & Row, 1987, p. 99). Yet Huang gives priority to the communicative aspect of dialogue over the substantial and doctrinal one: „the increasing pluralization of religions is in proportion to the increase in their interconnection, dialogue, and fusion of horizons'' ('Religious pluralism and interfaith dialogue...', op. cit., p. 140).

Furthermore, if we ascertain that religious ideas beliefs and practices are involved in historical, social and cultural development, hence, it can be traced within one religion or comparatively between two and more religions. The conclusion in the form of hypothesis is that perhaps there is such a religion that gives to the man relatively the most possibilities to realize his human essence. Thus, the main purpose of inter-religious dialogue is to determine the sphere in its various aspects and to test the strength of different arguments „for'' and „against''.

3. The idea of global theology

During the last three decades marked with growing increase in comparative studies in religion the need of theological discipline to embrace not only one but all great religions of the world has been more often discussed. Three basic questions are taken into consideration: 1) Is it possible to create such a discipline?; 2) What is to be its subject of study? and 3) What methods can it use? I focus on proposed names of the discipline, arguments for its validity and general characteristics of its subject. Finally I present some critical remarks.

One of the main problems (perhaps the most important one) in creating the theological discipline which would take into account all great world religions is to clear it of the confessional charge. According to widely accepted definition theology is the discipline to investigate only one religion. It explains and defends religious beliefs and ideas making its propositions in objective language. Those who postulate the idea of global theology seem to be conscious of the fact that Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Hindu theology as well as Buddhology and Taology are all confessional.

W. C. Smith remarks that a notion 'the theology of religions' may arouse a suspicion of Christian, Muslim, Hindu etc. theology of religions. He maintains that as far as there may be a Christian theology of work, of marriage, of art, of political liberation because faith, in its intellectual aspect, integrates and embraces almost all that one perceives and participates in, „...there cannot be a Christian theology of the other

religions, because religion embraces more than an outsider perceives''.[24] What does the word 'more' mean Smith roughly explains that it is the faith that is 'central', 'total' and 'supreme'. Theology theologises about things, garnering them into a coherent whole, but faith cannot be theologised about by an outsider, since „it is itself an organising principle, by which the person is open to the infinite and is enabled to see all that is finite in relation to that infinite. Therefore one community's faith is on principle precluded from being the object of another community's theology. Faith can be theologised only from the inside''.[25] On account of that Smith thinks that a Christian or Islamic, or Hindu theology of religions is an irrational concept, if it concives them as 'other'.[26]

There are several names of proposed discipline in Smith's *Towards a World Theology*: 'a theology of comparative religion', 'world theology', 'a theology of the religious history of humankind', 'theology in global perspective' and 'transcendentology'. The author explains that the phrase 'comparative religion' is analogous with 'comparative anatomy', 'comparative literature, and the like, and the term 'transcendentology' stands for the study of Transcendence.[27] J. Hick uses the expression 'global theology'[28], R. Panikkar as L. Swidler talks about 'a universal

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[24]W. C. Smith, *Towards a World Theology: Faith and the Comparative History of Religions*, London: Macmillan 1981, p. 110, cf., p. 109.

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 110-111. Smith uses here his typical distinction between *faith* and *belief*. The first is a human experience of being grasped by transcendent reality which necessarily precedes any attempt to conceptually articulate it; the second denotes theological systems and creeds which are posterior to the experiences on which they rest and from which they derive their life. According to Smith theological systems are historically and culturally conditioned and for that reason they are relative (W. J. Wainwright, 'Wilfred Cantwell Smith on Faith and Belief', *Religious Studies* 20 (1984), p. 353-366).

[26]W. C. Smith, *Towards a World Theology*, op. cit., p. 111.

[27]*Ibid.*, p. 123-125, 183. 'Theology' is defined by Smith as „talk about God; or more generically, about the transcendent dimention of human life and of the universe to which the history of religion (the history of man's spirit) bears witness and which it elucidates, and to which Christians have historically given the name 'God''' (*ibid.*, p. 151).

[28]J. Hick, *Death and Eternal Life*, London: Macmillan, 1985, p. 29n.; cf. his *God Has Many Names*, op. cit., p. 8.

theology of religion', and K. Ward uses the phrases 'open theology' or 'convergent theology' as opposed to 'closed theology'.[29]

To bring the theological discipline into being means to separate it from the system of sciences by determining its study subject and methods. Not all thinkers are convinced of the validity of global theology as the scientific discipline.[30] Those who think that it is possible to create such a discipline try to determine its tasks and the subject of study. Neither of them questions its non-confessional character. The attempt at clearing global theology of the confessional charge brought its adherents to formulate three different theoretical solutions, namely of 1) the universal (global) conception (W. C. Smith), 2) the complementary conception (J. Hick) and 3) convergent conception (K. Ward).

According to Smith the notion of 'theology of comparative religion' reflects the nature of the new discipline. Smith assumes that all theology is self-theology what means that neither is it a theology of one religion nor of religions and yet it must exclude no one. Smith lays emphasis on that global theology is „a theology for which 'the religions' are the subject, not the object; a theology that emerges out of 'all the religions of the world' (...), all the religious communities of the world, or (...) all the religious sub-communities of the human community''.[31] In other words global theology as a future discipline must be 'a theology of the religious history of

[29]R. Panikkar, 'The Jordan, the Tiber, and the Ganges. Three Kairological Moments of Christic Self-Consciousness', in J. Hick, P. Knitter (eds), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, op. cit., p. 101; see his 'The Invisible Harmony: A Universal Theory of Religion or a Cosmic Confidence in Reality?', in L. Swidler (ed.), *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988, p. 127nn. K. Ward, *Religion and Revelation: A Theology of Revelation in the World's Religions*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, p. 335, 339-340.

[30]J. Lipner, for instance, holds that there can arise no theology of religions or universe of faiths for two main reasons: first, that many basic philosophical presuppositions of, say, Indian and Western religion are non-convergent; second, that the very idea of 'God' in a particular religious tradition depends on the revelation and underlying theology that produce it ('Does Copernicus Help? Reflection for a Christian Theology of Religions', *Religious Studies* 13 (1977), p. 253).

[31]W. C. Smith, *Towards a World Theology*, op. cit., p. 124.

humankind' or 'the faith history of us human beings'. It must include basic elements of Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist faith and theology, but it can be none of them, since, as Smith underlines, there cannot be a theology of faith from the outside. Accordingly, the theology of comparative religion „must be the product of thinkers who see, who feel and, indeed, who know men and women of all religious groups and all centuries, as members of one community, one in which they themselves also participate''.[32] The main task of proposed discipline „is to interpret intellectually all human faith, one's own ant others'; comprehensively, and justly'', but assuming that different religions reflect partial concepts of Transcendence, revelation, salvation and religious truth, and that none of them has full and ultimate truth. Rather particular religions are on the way to the final truth.[33]

Smith thinks that theology of comparative religion will constisute in dialogue between great world religions. Not only its study subject will emerge in that way, but also its epistemological methods. Smith believes that „the task of attaining an epistemological sophistication that will be historically self-critical as well as universalist, is interlinked with, not prior to, our task of attaining corporate critical self-consciousness in the religious realm''.[34] On the other hand, systematic knowledge must be dynamic, personalist and historical, and must have to do with becoming more than with being.[35]

J. Hick is of the opinion that global theology can be built up if we distinguish in religion between the 'facts of faith' disclosed in the religious experience of a particular tradition the theories subseqently developed to integrate these into a systematic world-view.[36] The first are primary affirmations of faith which express the basic data apprehended by faith and the formulation of them is a descriptive and empirical process.

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[32] *Ibid.*, p. 125.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 152, 167-179, 187ff.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 189.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 192.

[36] J. Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses th the Transcendent*, London: Macmillan, 1989, p. 372.

Theological doctrines, respectively, are the propositions officially accepted as interpreting primary affirmations and relating them together in a coherent system of thought. The construction of doctrine is speculative in method, being philosophical thinking undertaken within the boundaries of a particular tradition.[37] According to Hick's pluralistic hypothesis primary affirmations are different manifestations, within different streams of human life, of the one ultimate Relity, and that the truth or validity or authenticity of such manifestations lies in their soteriological effectiveness.[38] Hick thinks that „it is because affirmations about the nature of reality are true or false or, more probably, partly true and partly false, that the theologies of the different religions can be compared with one another, that agreements and disagreements can be registered, and that the possibility of syntheses and even of a comprehensive global theology cannot be excluded in advance''.[39]

Thus, the global theology will be developed out of a comparison of the theological affirmations of the different world faiths. The various confessional theologies may turn out to be in final opposition to one another or it may become possible to see them as partial accounts, from different angles, of a more complex ultimate Reality. Hick maintains that the project of global theology will be „the attempt to use these different affirmations, and the modes of religious experience on which they are based, as data for the construction of comprehensive religious theories. Such a theology would consist in a body of hypotheses about the nature of reality, expressing the basic common ground of the world religions, and receiving mythic expression and devotional content in different ways within different historical traditions''.[40]

K. Ward is convinced that it makes sense to speak of 'a common structure of faith' at the heart of many religious traditions, and of 'a common core of belief' in a number of traditions about the suprasensory

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[37]J. Hick, *Faith and Knowledge*, London: Macmillan, 1987, p. 218.

[38]J. Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, op. cit., p. 373ff.

[39]J. Hick, *Death and Eternal Life*, London: Macmillan, 1985, p. 29.

[40]*Ibid.*, p. 30; cf. *God Has Many Names*, op. cit., p. 8.

reality, the ultimate goal of religious practice and true human fulfilment.[41] Convergence of the central focal concepts of various religions makes it possible to speak of 'a convergent spirituality' in the modern world.[42] Ward explains that the convergence is not a movement of all traditions to a new, universally accepted tradition. „It is a recognition that many cultures and traditions are engaged in a common quest for unity with supreme perfection; a hope that they may seek and achieve a convergence in common core beliefs, as complementary images come to be more widely recognied; and an acceptance of the partiality and inadequacy of all human concepts to capture the object of that quest definitively''.[43]

The open theology, as postualted by Ward, can be characterized by six features. First, it will seek a convergence of common core beliefs, claryfying the deep agreements which may underlie diverse cultural traditions. Second, it will seek to learn from complementary beliefs in other traditions, expecting that there are forms of revelation one's own tradition does not express. Third, it will be prepared to reinterpret its beliefs in the light of new, well-established factual and moral beliefs. Fourth, it will accept the full right of diverse belief-systems to exist, as long as they do not cause avoidable injury or harm to innocent sentient beings. Fifth, it will encourage a dialogue with conflicting and dissenting views, being prepared to confront its own tradition with critical questions arising out of such views. Sixth, it will try to develop a sensitivity to the historical and cultural contexts of the formulation of its own beliefs, with a preparedness to continue developing new insights in new cultural situations.[44]

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[41]K. Ward, *Religion and Revelation*, op. cit., p. 337f.

[42]*Ibid.*, p. 95f., 302.

[43]*Ibid.*, p. 339.

[44]*Ibid.*, p. 339-340. A 'closed theology', as opposed to 'open theology', is - according to Ward - one which insists on the total distinctiveness of its own beliefs. It excludes others from any share in important truths, rejects all contact with other systems of belief and any developments of knowledge which would force a reinterpretation of its own tradition. It will restrict or prevent the expression of criticism or dissent. It will seek to suppress othe religions, insisting that it possesses a complete or sufficient understanding truth, which change could only impair o destroy (*ibid.*, p. 340).

Some proposals for transforming traditional Christian theology are also put forward by some modern American theologians. Two main reasons for them are given in principle: the growing consciousness of world problems and challenges that face the modern man and the fact of plurality and variety of religions. It is difficult to find out precisely if those proposals are similar to the idea of global theology or theology of comparative religion of W. C. Smith's, J. Hick's and K. Ward's. Nevertheless, both G. Kaufman and L. Gilkey, as well as S. J. Samartha, P. Knitter and others think the change of Christian theology from orthodoxy to heterodoxy to be necessary.[45]

It is not our task in this paper to elaborate the question of legitimacy of theological and comparative studies in religion; neither is it the critical evaluation of methodological status of global theology. We maintain that that sort of investigation is unfeasible if the statements are formulated in object-language. Theology of a particular religion may be defined as study in which, along with other axioms, at least one sentence is assumed which belongs to a given creed and which is not sustained by persons other than the believers of a given religion. The sentences which constitute objective faith of a given religion are among others: 'There is a God', 'Christ is the Son of God', 'Mohammed is the Prophet of Allah', 'There is Reincarnation', 'There is Nirvana', 'Tao manifests through all things'. In every theology (buddhology or taology) there is a meta-linguistic rule indicating which sentences are to be considered as elements of objective faith. There is also the basic assumption according to which every element of objective faith - that is, every sentence designated by the meta-linguistic rule - has to be accepted as true. Thus a Catholic says that whatever God revealed and the Church proposes to be believed is true; in Islam it is believed that whatever has been revealed by Mohammed has to be considered as true; and in Buddhism the basic truth is that revealed by Buddha, and so on. Rabbi, Christian, Muslim or Hindu theologist as well as buddhologist, every of them makes a thorough study of axioms and the

[45]See G. Kaufman, 'Religious Diversity, Historical Consciousness, and Christian Theology', op. cit., p. 11-13; L. Gilkey, 'Plurality and Its Theological Implications', op. cit., p. 41-43; S. J. Samartha, 'The Cross and the Rainbow', op. cit., p. 81-83.

structure of his own faith and accepts as true, without a further object-linguistic proof, sentences which belong to the creed of his religion.

As far as a theologian can study only the faith of his own religion, a comparativist, on the other hand, is interested in the problems which are common to all religions. But a theologian can reflect on his own work and formulate sentences in meta-theological language. At the point of his study field a theologian comes to exercise the work of a philosopher of religion who, in his investigations, does not need to accept statements only on account of that they belong to a given creed. We maintain that meta-theological system including a few religions can be built up in principle, provided that no credal sentence of eny religion can by changed, corrected or lost. Therefore, meta-theological system would be the work of philosophy of religion, not a theology which first of all explains and defends the faith of a particular religion.

The role of theology in comparative study of religions and its relation to philosophy of religion is understood differently, and not always clearly, by modern American philosophers of religion. Franklin Gamewell thinks that „because it is critical reflection on the claims of a particular religion, theology is similar to comparative philosophy of religion in that both require philosophical theology.[46] But the question what is philosophical theology is not answered by the author. Robert Cummings Neville shares the opinion that theology has been significantly changed by the new circumstances, i.e. comparative studies and interreligious dialogue. He says that „if theology is to deal with the truth of its issues, it cannot limit itself to what any one tradition or community believes (...). [It] must also make its arguments vulnerable to any and all who have an interest in the issue at hand, and thus its arguments need to be able to be cast in comparative language. (...). Therefore, (...) at present time theology requires three different but interdependent genres: traditional theology that interprets and reconstructs the symbols of a tradition (each tradition) in currently defensible and relevant ways, comparative theology that allows for the integration of perspectives needed to have public claim to truth in

[46]F. Gamwell, 'A Foreword to Comparative Philosophy of Religion', in F. E. Reynolds, D. Tracy (eds), *Religion and Practical Reason*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994, p. 47.

even just one tradition, and philosophical theology that relates the symbols to their referents in critical fashion''.[47] However, the problem of most importance is not to divide theology into parts but the question of legitimacy of comparative theology and its relation to philosophical theology considered in methodological and subject study bearing.

[47]R. C. Neville, 'Religions, philosophies, and philosophy of religion', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 38 (1995), p. 179.

Survey

TRUTH OR TEMPERAMENT

A Fresh Approach to the Study of the Comparative Religion

Arvind Sharma

It is now almost a century since the inception of the comparative study of religion. As the data on religion from all parts of the world continues to be collected and collated, the suggestion has been made that one might now speak of the religion of man/woman in the singular rather than of the religions of man/woman in the plural. In any case, the data on the religious life of man/woman is capable of being viewed as a single entity when it comes to academic study of religion.

II

This aggregation of data, however, is so enormous that its further analysis requires some framework for its preliminary organization. Three such frameworks seem to be in vogue in the current study of religion. The first and the most popular method is to make the initial presentation in terms of the various religious traditions of mankind. Thus a book or a textbook on comparative religion is typically organized *according to tradition.* Thus the immensely popular *The Religions of Man* (now *The Word's Religions*) by Huston Smith introduces the material tradition-wise-the traditions covered being Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Islam, Judaism and Christianity, in that order.

III

A second approach has been to layout the data not according to traditions but according to themes. Thus one of the early works on comparative religion, that of E.O. James,[1] dealt with the material topic-wise rather than tradition-wise. This approach to the data of religion also distinguishes such well-known works in the field of comparative religion

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[1]See Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1986) p. 246.

as those by W.B. Kristensen[2] and T. and G. van der Leeuw.[3] This approach devoted to a single theme such as, kingship. Thus just as these could be single treatise on a tradition, such as Hinduism or Islam, there could be single treatise on a topic or theme, as well.

IV

A third approach towards the initial presentation of data can also be identified. This consists of presenting the material neither through traditions or through topics but a time period. Thus one could present the data in terms of the 6th century B.C., 5th century B.C. or 17th century A.D. etc. The manifestations of religious activity all over the globe during a particular period are thus detailed.

The purpose of this paper is to suggest that a fourth way of presenting the data on the religious life of man/woman. This would present the material not in terms of a tradition, a theme or a time-period but in terms of temperament. One could, for instance, use the four-fold classification of the psyche used by Jung for the human personality and use theme as the four salient for organizing the data, or alternatively, one could take to the cue from the fact that:

> The number of the basic spiritual personality types, by Hindu count, is four. (Carl Jung built this typology on the Indian model, while modifying it in certain respects.) Some people are primarily reflective. Others are basically emotional. Still others are essentially active. Finally, some are experimentally inclined. For each of these personality types Hinduism prescribes a distinct *yoga* that is designed to capitalize on the type's distinctive strength. The types are not sealed in watertight compartments, for every human being possess all

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[2]W. Brede Kristensen, *The Meaning of Religion: Lectures in the Phenomenology of Religion,* trans. John B. Carman (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960).

[3]G. van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation,* trans. J.E. Turner (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

four talents to some degree, just as most hands of cards contain al four suits. But it makes sense to lead with the suit that is strongest.[4]

The Yogas, of course, are Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga and Hatha Yoga. In other words, the religious data can be organized in accordance with these four yogas.

At this point the question arises: what does one hope to gain by such a procedure? Any reorganization of data on fresh lives usually holds the province of yielding new insights. What precisely these insights are going to be like if it is not always possible to foresee? The insights which the organization of religious data according to themes disclosed is well-known to all students of the phenomenology of religion, even though it might not have been possible to anticipate them when the new approach was first tried. In this particular case, however, at least a part of the benefits may be foreseeable. When data are organized according to the yogas then one likely result is going to be a depend and broadened understanding of a particular yoga. This will have the effect of allying the academic study of religion with the active pursuit of religious life in the same manner in which science is allied to technology. The gulf between the academic study of religion and the practice of religion could be thus partially bridged.

An actual example will help clarify the point. Under which rubric will most of Confucianism be placed in the schema of the four Yogas? A little reflection will show that, out of four, the most appropriate place for it would be under Karma Yoga. For Karma Yoga covers the fields of social and ritual activity. Yet the very act of placing Confucianism under Karma Yoga becomes immensely consequential for the nature of Karma Yoga itself- at least in two ways. Firstly, the general understanding of Karma Yoga till now has primarily been in (1) ritual (as with the Mimamsakas) or (2) ethical (the performance of one's duty as with the Gita) without thought of terms. Now although Confucianism has elements of ritual, it is primarily as a system of social relationships that it lays claim on our attention. Thus Karma Yoga now obtains a more clear-cut social dimension than it has hitherto had. One may not how this now ties back with the emphasis in the Gita on doing one's varna duties. Yet this is not

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[4]Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991) p. 29.

whether the emphasis per se lies in the Gita – it is on the non-attachment to the rewards of the action performed. But Confucianism places the emphasis on the social duty itself and thus lights it up as a full facet of Karma Yoga. This emphasis in turn will not be entirely sterile in its impact on Karma Yogins in modern India.

It is therefore suggested that a fourth approach to the initial presentation of religious data may be espoused. To date this data has been presented to tradition, or theme, or time-period. It was suggested in this paper that its presentation according to temperament or types may also be possible and desirable.

BOOK REVIEW

Sebastian Alackapally, *Being and Meaning (Reality and Language in Bhartrhari and Heidegger),* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2002, pp. xviii+297, Rs. 490, ISBN: 81-208-1803-2.

The phenomenon of the encounter of religions and philosophies of the West and the East has become a very conspicuous one with the increasing number of comparative studies in the recent times. Dr. Sebastian Alackapally's *Being and Meaning* is another welcome addition to this literature to make the West and the East meet. One of the ever-alive dreams of this endeavour is that their philosophical and religious formulations, since they converge so closely, are bound to meet at one point. It has become an open question as we consider the roots and aspirations behind these formulations of the philosophical and religious quests. The truth, however, is that ultimately, when these formulations are viewed as pure germinal intuitions, all philosophical and religious reflections, both in the West and the East, are inspired by the same vision of man's true and original nature. This seems to be the working hypothesis in the book under review.

The subtitle of the book uses more concrete terms to reach out the more abstract aspect of reality. Real (*sat*) has to have being and its experience articulated naturally in language leads the seeker to meanings and the total sum of meanings. For Bhartrhari (c.450-510), a philosopher of language from India and Martin Heidegger (1889- 1976), a German existentialist philosopher, reflection on being and language is a common theme, though evolved from different cultural contexts, distant from each other in space and time. Dr. Sebastian develops various aspects of these reflections in four chapters with a general introduction and a general conclusion with two chapters each set apart for the study of the contributions of Bhartrhari and Heidegger.

The general introduction makes it clear that thinking on being is thinking on reality in language. The *Vakyapadiya*, the masterpiece of Bhartrhari, "through the doctrines of *Sabdabrahman*, *sphota* etc...largely presents the outlines of the metaphysics of linguistic philosophy"(p.9), a philosophy based on the non-dual (*advaitic*) vision of reality. Heidegger in his masterpiece *Being and Time* suggests that thinking on Being is the only way to come closer to Being or Reality (p.17). Bhartrhari also agrees with

this view that the only way to supreme reality has to be through the spoken or written word (*sabda*) and its meaning in language and so an analysis of language is not an optional activity in philosophy, but the core of it both in the East and the West.

Heidegger took up the classical theme of mind representing material object or being inherited from the Greek philosophy, especially from Aristotle. To bypass this traditional "picture, Heidegger sets out to describe *Dasein's* "average everydayness" (p.17). For him the analytic of *Dasein* is an ontological hermeneutics to the extent that it provides an account of how understanding in general is possible. Since there is no pre-given human essence, humans in their authenticity are understood as self-interpreting beings, who take a stand on their life by acting in the world. All the dominant characteristics of *Dasein* gain their fuller significance in the interpretation of its temporality. Heidegger tried to escape the subjectivism of this interpretation by taking a stance characterized by meditative thinking, thankfulness for the 'gift' of being, and openness to the silent 'call' of language. Here the problem of the nature of language is intimately connected with the problem of the meaning of Being. Heidegger moves away from his earlier position that "language is found to be constitutive of the existence of the individual human beings" and enters into the meditation of Being as such and retrieves the key word 'logos' which not only merely signifies 'language' or reason, but also indicates the primal gathering of beings in Being. In other words 'word' and 'speech' as distinguished from everyday language, is directly involved in the disclosure of the Being of beings.

Bhartrhari, on the other hand, is right on his target and presented a theory of language, which is just the opposite of the thought-development we find in Heidegger. For him the very essence of speech or meaning (*sabdattatva*) itself is the ultimate reality (Being or Brahman) and it is also in a lower level, the *sphota* (meaning or content) of language. Unlike that of Heidegger, the following opening verse of *Vakyapadiya* itself shows that Bhartrhari started with a perfected vision of reality and language. "That beginningless and endless one, the imperishable Brahman of which the essential nature is the Word, which manifests itself into objects and from which is the creation of universe."

In Bhartrhari, as in Heidegger, time is an essential factor affecting being. He does not begin from the being of the everydayness of the humans. The very eternal, timeless itself appears in Bhartrhari's thought as changing owing to the working of time factor. The *sabdatattva*, in fact, is immutable and it transcends space, time and causality. Bhartrhari therefore, proposes *vagyoga* to raise the level of consciousness of words to the highest stage of the word-principle to reach the complete absence of all sorts of differentiation and sequence.

The essence of Bhartrhari's view of language is that how several phonemes forming a word, or many words making up a sentence could have a single meaning for the listener. Grounding on his basic theory that reality is an integral whole, which can be cognized as such, he postulated a meaning-bearing symbol called *sphota*, from which the meaning bursts forth. Here the real is the essence of words, that is *sphota*, which is one. In the identification of Brahman with *sphota* the language or grammar dissolves into philosophy. This concept is certainly unique and without parallel in the western thought. As a concluding critical remark the author writes: "Although he visualized Grammar as a means of attaining *moksha* he does not describe the stages of this spiritual ascent. Yet his main purpose in *Vakyapadiya* seems to be rolling up the curtain on the stage of human communication so that the communicants may have a *darsan* of the hidden mystery of all meanings behind all words of human dialogue and performance on the stage of social communication" (p.102).

The book, though limited in its scope, is a veritable contribution to the field of comparative study of eastern and western philosophies. The central concerns of the authors under discussion are lucidly presented. With an extensive bibliography, detailed index and an appendix on *sabda,* the book has become a dependable tool for further studies in the field of epistemology and metaphysics.

Prof. Thomas Kadankavil CMI

BOOK NOTICE

1. Augustine Thottakara, cmi (ed), *Western Encounter With Indian Philosophy* (Dharmaram Philosophy Series-1), Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2002, pp. 362, Rs. 250.oo; US$20.oo, ISBN: 81-86861-40-8.

This is the first volume of the *Dharmaram Philosophy Series.* It is an attempt to compare and contrast Indian and western philosophical systems/philosophers, and find out parallels and contrasts in the thoughts of these two philosophical traditions. India definitely has a very ancient tradition of philosophy and metaphysical thinking. Philosophy in India is basically an intense quest to know the essence of human person, and thereby understand the mystery of life and self. It is vision, *darsana,* of Reality in its totality and wholeness, with its cause-effect relations, essence and qualities, etc. A philosopher in this respect, is not only a lover and inquirer of wisdom, but also a lover and seeker of the vision of reality, a spiritual aspirant. There was, of course, a parallel development of philosophy in the West. Western philosophy always demanded greater intellectual discipline and rational expertise than spiritual eminence. The intense and enthusiastic western encounter with Indian thought began in the beginning of the nineteenth century. From that time onwards there was brisk mutually enriching and mutually uplifting interaction between the two traditions.

There are fifteen researched essays in the first part of the book. Some of the essays are: "Being as *Tad Ekam*: Western Neo-Scholastic and Indian Approaches to Metaphysics" by George Panthanmackel, "The Ascent-Descent Dialectics of Being" by Cyriac Kanichai, "Transmigration in the Upanishads and in the Greek Thought" by Gabriel Aranjnaniyil, "An Indian Poet Contemplates on the Life of Christ" by Augustine Thottakara, "Meeting Between the East and West: The Vision of Sri Aurobindo" by Thomas Aykara, etc. This book is also a *Festschrift* in honour of Prof. Dr. Thomas Kadankavil, who is retiring from teaching from the Faculty of Philosophy of Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore.

2. Antony Kalliath, cmi (ed), *Christian Leadership: The Shifting Focus in Theological Education*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, pp. 396, Rs.300.oo; US$22.oo, ISBN:81-86861-41-6

This book contains the papers presented at the National Seminar organized by Dharmaram Vidya Kshteram as part of the Silver Jubilee

celebration of its establishment in 1976. The theme of the Seminar was "Theological Education for Christian Leadership in the Liberative and Pluralistic Context of India". This volume has seventeen articles in three parts. The first part deals with "Christian Leadership: Theological Concerns", the second part is on "Theological Education: Formative Concerns", and the third part treats "Christian Leadership and Education: New Horizons". Today, leadership crisis is ubiquitous, whether it is in politics, economy, culture, science, or religion. People find old paradigms and presuppositions inadequate to engage with the quantum and suddenness of change happening at this juncture of human history. The Church cannot remain insulated from the ongoing crisis of directionlessness in the society. The call of the present ethos is to recognize that the reality is verily plurality. Leadership should then primarily become context sensitive. The movement should be from locality to universality, context to content. Act locally and think globally.

Some of the essays are: "Christian Leadership and the Praxis of Jesus" by Jacob Parappally, "Situative Theological Education: Biblical Perspectives" by Joseph Pathrapankal, "Rethinking Theological Education in India" by Kuncheria Pathil, "An Indian Way of Theologising" by Bandhu Ishanand, "Moral Theologizing in the Liberative Pluralistic Context of India" by George Therukattil, "Christian Leadership as Inter-religious Apostolate" by John B. Chethimattam.

3. J. Mattam, S.J., & P. Arockiadoss, S.J. (eds), *Hindutva: An Indian Christian Response* (Proceedings of the 23rd Annual Meeting of the Indian Theological Association (ITA), held at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore on 26-30 Aril 2000), Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2002, pp. 330, Rs. 225.oo; US$18.oo, ISBN: 81-86861-39-4

This volume contains the proceedings of the 23rd Annual Meeting of the Indian Theological Associatoion (ITA), held at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore on 26-30 April 2000. Fascism and Nazism had left their destructive trails in the past. Now, religious fundamentalism and fanaticism are doing the same the world over. When they are mixed with narrow political agenda, they become very deadly. Currently India is facing this threat in the form of growing Hindutva nationalism and the bitter reactions it begets. Christians and other responsible citizens cannot ignore the threats posed by these movements. It is imperative that responsible citizens, who love this country and its future, study this phenomenon and try to meet it with creative and healing responses. This volume which deals with the reasons and circumstances of the emergence of Hindutva, its different manifestations, the challenges it poses to Christianity

in India and the possible Christian response to it, is a significant contribution from the perspective of the Indian Christians.

The book contains five very informative and scholarly essays and the concluding statement. The essays are: "Hindutva's Real Agenda and Strategies" by Yvon Ambroise (this essay has seven appendices which give detailed information and statistics about the growth and different activities of the Hindutva movement), "The Emergence of Hindutva" by Subhash Anand, "A Secular Critique of Hindutva" by A. Pushparajan, "Christians between Identity-Politics and Nationalism" by Felix Wilfred, and "The Challenge of Hindutva: An Indian Christian Response" by Kurien Kunnumpuram. This work is definitely very useful for all those who teach and learn religion, theology and philosophy, and all those who desire to acquire authentic and documented knowledge of the recent developments in Hinduism and Indian politics.

4. Scott W. Sunquist (ed.), David Wu Chu Sing and John Chew Hiang Chea (associate eds.), A *Dictionary of Asian Christianity*, Grand Rapids – Cambridge: William B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 2001, pp. xliii+947. US$ 75.oo. ISBN: 0-8028-3776-X.

Jesus Christ is an Asian. He was born, he lived, preached his message, died and resurrected to life again in the Asian soil. All the world religions, in fact, took origin and grew strong in Asia. Hinduism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism, Islam and Sikhism: all these are products of Asia. Christianity, though born in Asia, due to historical and geographical vicissitudes and reasons, spread to the West. In the course of time Christianity was identified and categorized as a western religion, and had to be re-introduced in many of the Asian countries. But it should also be noted here that there are also small individual Churches in Asia, which trace back their origin to the apostolic times. The Churches of St. Thomas Christians in Kerala, India, belong to these groups. It is believed St. Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Christ, arrived Kerala in the year 52 and preached Gospel there. In most of the Asian countries Christianity is a minority, dynamic and creative minority though.

This Dictionary gives the details of the Churches in the Asian countries. More than 500 scholars from eighteen Asian countries have contributed 1260 articles to this outstanding volume. These scholars are experts on their local Churches on which they have contributed articles. Besides the general history of origin, development and present status, the work also includes short biographical sketches of eminent leaders of individual Asian Churches. The

religious, social, cultural, literary and political movements, which shaped the destinies of these Churches, are also adequately dealt with. For the first time a comprehensive dictionary, a basic reference work, is being published for the study and research of Asian Christianity. 'Christianity has been in Asian cultures for two millennia. This remarkable work captures that history, showing how Christianity has impacted Asian cultures as well as how those cultures have in turn shaped Christianity. Christianity is described here through the various political movements (Korean War, colonialism, communism), cultural influences (Buddhism, Ancestor Worship), and Christian movements (Jesuits and Methodists in Asia) that have occurred over the 2000 years. Some of the articles identify the important role of particular leaders, both Christian and non-Christian, while other articles examine larger movements of Christian development (Bible translation, medical work, literacy, pastoral care).'

Bibliographies of the individual themes and maps of various regions of Asia enhance the merit and usefulness of the work. This dictionary would definitely be of immense value for teachers and students of Church history and theology and to all who desire to know details of Asian Christianity.

5. Victor Segesvary, *Dialogue of Civilization. An Introduction to Civilizational Analysis,* Lanham-New York-Oxford: University Press of America, 1999, pp.152. US$ 27.50. ISBN: 0-7618-1632-1.

Inter-religious dialogue or inter-faith dialogue had been a major movement of the twentieth century. Inter-religious dialogue, as we understand it today and in the form it is being practised now, originated in latter half of the past century. It was mostly Christian organizations which took the lead and gave shape to the *modus operandi* of the organized forms of dialogue with specific common agenda of study and discussion and conscious courses of action, like inter-religious prayer meetings, sharing of experiences, live-togethers, seminars, etc. The present work deals with inter-civilizational dialogue. Instead of speaking of 'clash of civilizations', we need to seek ways and means for constructive and creative dialogue between various civilizations of the world. This work on dialogue of civilizations proclaims that such a dialogue between the mighty civilizations of the present world would be the greatest need of this twenty-first century. Just like dialogue between religious traditions is essential for peace and harmony in the world, this dialogue too is essential to promote peaceful co-existence and mutual collaboration between nations and civilizational units of the world. 'A civilizational dialogue necessitates familiarity with major aspects of other civilizations such as religion, symbolism, and myth in the spiritual domain, social structure and

development, or political organization in the social and institutional spheres. Familiarity between civilizations would enable them, in the course of the dialogue, to identify shared beliefs and values which are the common aspects of humanity that unite us all'. This work introduces to the reader the panorama of world civilizations and an in-depth study of these civilizations. The work would be of great value for students of culture, anthropology, and political science.

6. Vinoth Ramachandra, *Faiths in Conflict? Christian Integrity in a Multicultural World. London Lectures in Contemporary Christianity,* Secunderabad: Om Books, 1999, pp.193. Rs.69.oo. ISBN: 81-7362-220.

This book is a revised and enlarged version of the four lectures the author delivered in November 1998 at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, under the auspices of the Institute of Contemporary Christianity. The London lectures are instituted to promote Christian thought on contemporary issues. The work contains five chapters besides an Epilogue and bibliography. The first chapter on "Islam and New Religious Wars?" deals with the resurgence of Islam in recent decades and its strong presence in the West. It criticizes the view of Samuel Huntington in his *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order.* Huntington states that Islam and the West are by nature mutually hostile. Islamic propaganda that it is a religion of peace is also critically analyzed. The second chapter is on "Hinduism and the Search for Identity". It analyses the interaction between the secular and religious visions of nationalism within the Hinduism. The third chapter is entitled "The Jesus Enigma", and tries to understand Jesus, his message and his relevance today. "Conversion of Cultures" and "Secularism and Civility" are the fourth and fifth chapters, which deal with the diversities and conflicts between different truth-claims and a contextual approach to issues of secularism, civility and common good.

7. A.Aloysius Xavier and M. David Stanly Kumar (eds.), *The Word is Near You. Collected Papers of Lucien Legrand, MEP,* Vol. I, Bangalore: St. Peter's Pontifical Institute (Indian Theological Studies Supplements-3), 2001, pp.viii+423. Rs.200.oo; US$ 17.oo.

Dr. Lucien Legrand, MEP is Professor Emeritus of Sacred Scriptures at St. Peter's Pontifical Institute, Bangalore. He, a French national, came to Bangalore in 1953, and ever since has been teaching Bible and theology at St. Peter's. He has written 150 articles and five books. St. Peter's Pontifical

Institute is publishing his articles in three volumes. This first volume consists of articles on 'Introduction to Bible' (four articles), 'Exegesis of Old Testament' (five articles), 'Exegesis of New Testament', (eight articles) and articles on 'Infancy Narratives' (ten articles). Coming from the pen of a great scholar in Bible and biblical theology, these articles are definitely useful for students and teachers of the Sacred Scriptures.

8. John F. Sequeira, OCD, *Discipline of Dialogue. An Appraisal of Gadamer's Hermeneutics,* Mysore: Dhyanavan Publications, 2001, pp.xiv+349. Rs.350.oo; US$ 25.oo. ISBN: 81-901250-1-X.

The German philosopher Hans Georg Gadamer is one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century. His work *Truth and Method* 'is one of the two or three most important works of this century on the philosophy of humanistic studies. His philosophy completes the existential-ontological theory of understanding and at the same time provides the foundation for its supercession through an emphasis on the linguisticality of understanding'. In the process of understanding of the objects and objective world language plays an important role. All understanding is linguistic. This study aims at the ontological hermeneutics realized in language. The five chapters of the book are: "The Grounding of the Philosophical Hermeneutics of Gadamer in its Historical Context", "The Grounding of Hermeneutic Understanding in its Essential Elements", "The Ontological Nature of Hermeneutics Guided by Language", "A Topical Study of the Gadamer-Habermas Debate" and "A Critical Evaluation". The author John Sequeira is now the Dean of Studies of the Pushpashram Philosophical College of Mysore.

9. Shohei Ichimura, *Buddhist Critical Spirituality. Prajñā and Śūnyatā,* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2001, pp.xvii+435. Rs.795. (North American Institute of Zen and Buddhist Studies Series-4). ISBN: 81-208-1798-2.

This volume contains fifteen essays prepared and presented by the author on different occasions. The essays refer to Indian and South Asian, Chinese and East Asian Buddhism. The author envisages the concepts *Prajñā* and *Śūnyatā* as the concepts of Buddhist spirituality and philosophy of religion, and believes that these insights can initiate a future religion, which is free from the eternal conflicts between reason and faith. Buddhism, as is well known, does not believe in a creator God. Many schools of Buddhism do not admit the objectivity of external world and do not believe in individual self or self of human beings. Still it can speak about spirituality, the actualization of which

helps the seeker to realize a state of emancipation beyond the human and material exigencies and sufferings. It is a non-theistic spirituality. The author hopes this type of spirituality, which is beyond the confines of individual religious traditions, may pave the way to universal peace, happiness and also salvation. These researched articles are definitely useful for a post-modern understanding of Buddhism and its spirituality.

10. William Sweet (ed.), *God and Argument. Dieu et L'Argumentation Philosophique,* Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1999, pp.x+275. ISBN: 0-7766-0499-6; ISSN: 1480-4743.

This volume contains fifteen researched articles by eminent philosophers. The central theme of the book is God. Proofs for his existence, his nature, religious belief, studies on the authors who have dealt with the arguments for the existence of God, etc. are the contents of the work. The authors try to highlight the contemporary debate on God's existence and religious belief. Anti-realism, anti-foundationalism, post-modernism, etc. pose great challenge to the traditional tenets of philosophy of God or theodicy. The contributors to this volume are: Leslie Armour, James Bradley, William Desmond, Lawrence Dewan, G. Goldstick, John Haldane, Peter Harris, Denis Hurtubise, Robert Larmer, Louis Perron, James Ross, William Sweet. Elizabeth Trott, Bernard Vinaty and Jason West.

11. Jacques Dupuis, S.J., *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism,* Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 2001, pp.xxii+439. Rs.265.oo; US$ 15.oo. ISBN: 81-87886-47-1.

This is the Indian edition of Prof. Dupuis' famous work. It was first published by Editrice Queriniana, Italy in 1997, then by Orbis Books, Meryknoll in 1999. This book became widely known when the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith judged that it contained "serious errors against essential elements of Divine and Catholic Faith". The book, as the title indicates, deals with the fact of religious pluralism and Christian approach to this fact. It very ably deals with themes like 'Theology of Religion', 'The Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism', 'Evangelization in this World of Religious Pluralism', 'Uniqueness of Jesus Christ', 'Inter-religious Dialogue', 'Church and Reign of God', etc. The first part of the book gives an historical overview of Christian approaches to other religions. The second part is entitled as 'One God – One Christ – Convergent Paths'. The following description is given by the publisher about this important work: 'In this magisterial book, Jacques Dupuis brings together a lifetime of study, reflection, and experience in

both Europe and Asia to outline a significant shift in Christian theological understanding of world religious pluralism. The premise of *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* is that the question has shifted from whether 'salvation' occurs for members of other religious traditions to how in God's plan these traditions mediate salivation to their members.

Written with scholarly balance and theological sure-footedness, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* is a masterwork, a book that is destined to become the classic of scholarly analysis of the most important question facing Christian theology in a world of religious diversity'.

12. William Sweet (ed.), *The Bases of Ethics*, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2000, pp.252 (Marquette Studies in Philosophy No.23). ISBN: 0-87462-622-6.

Philosophical movements like Post-modernism, Subjectivism, Skepticism, etc. have challenged the bases or foundations of all systems including moral philosophy. Can one really speak about basis or bases in ethics? The present volume, which contains a collection of twelve essays, tries to answer this question. 'The essays in this collection draw their inspiration from a wide range of sources – from classical and medieval authors and from the phenomenological analytic, idealistic, Thomist and feminist schools.'

13. Franz Xaver Scheuerer, *Interculturality. A Challenge for the Mission of the Church*, Bangalore: Asian Trading corporation, 2001, pp.xxi+268. ISBN: 81-7086-267-1.

This book is an abridged and modified version of the doctoral dissertation of the author. Humankind, irrespective of culture, country, colour, creed, caste and customs, shares many basic characteristics in common. Cultural diversity is also a fact. Positive, effective and dynamic intercultural communication and interaction are essential to maintain this unity in diversity. Instead of speaking about the clashes of cultures and civilizations, we need to promote and propagate intercultural harmony and fellowship. The process of globalization is very often depicted as a threat to the survival of local cultures, especially in developing countries. In spite of the real and imagined dangers of globalization, the fact remains that it, together with all the modern instruments of communication media, has brought together peoples and nations. The book ably discusses this interculturality in the context of Christian mission. The second part of the book is dedicated to Church's Mission and Interculturality. Chapter V, the last chapter of the book, deals with 'Interculturality as a Challenge for the Indian Church and Its Mission Practice'.

14. David Emmanuel Singh and Robert Edwin Schick (eds.), *Approaches, Foundations, Issues and Models of Interfaith Relations,* Delhi: SPCK & HMI, 2001, pp.iv+499. Rs.200.oo; US$ 18.oo. ISBN: 81-7214-621-3.

This book is jointly published by the Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (ISPCK) and Henry Martyn Institute of Islamic Studies (HMI). The work contains articles on dialogue published in the *Bulletin of the Henry Martyn Institute of Islamic Studies* (till 1998) and then in *The Journal of the Henry Martyn Institute* of the HMI. These articles are published in this volume under four heads: (i) Christian Approaches to Religions: Focus on Islam, (ii) Issues in Christian-Muslim Relations, (iii) Foundations of Interfaith Encounters, and (iv) Models of Interfaith Relations. The Henry Martyn School of Islamic Studies came into existence in 1930, and from 1941 it started publishing its Bulletin. The services this famous institute has done to further Islamic studies among Christians, and to promote dialogue between Islam and Christianity are immense. The Institute regularly runs courses on Islamology and Arabic. As the editor of this work and present editor of *The Journal of the Henry Martyn Institute* Dr. David Emmanuel Singh rightly notes there is conspicuous absence of interest among Indian Christians on all levels in the study of Islam - among professors of theology and philosophy, among seminarians, media professionals, teachers of religions, school teachers. Also Christian institutions like seminaries, spirituality centres, cultural and dialogue centres do not show adequate interest in the study and research in Islam, its theology, spirituality and culture. This work with twenty-three researched articles on Christian-Islam dialogue, we hope, would inspire greater interest among Christians in creative and sympathetic study of this great world religion.

15. Albert Nambiaparambil, cmi, *Pilgrims of the Seashore of Endless Worlds*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2002, pp. xvi+151. ISBN: 81-7086-273-6. Rs.95.oo

The author of this small work Dr. Albert Nambiaparambil is one of the pioneers of the culture of inter-faith dialogue in India. He has been active in the field of dialogue and comparative study of religions since 1972, and has organized numerous prayer sessions, live-togethers, national and inter-national seminars on inter-religious dialogue. This book contains his experiences with his fellow travelers in his pilgrimage of dialogue. It contains more than forty-five short articles. Swami Agnivesh in his Foreword to the book says: "*Seashore* is a spiritual protest against dividing people in the name of religion. It is a call to dismantle the walls of division erected by those who wish to retain

religion as a playground of communalism and religious obscurantism". The following words of the author express his hope and his skepticism about the future of inter-religious dialogue: "Interfaith dialogue was, for me, a pilgrimages, a new lesson of hope, of hope in the communion of all and in all. This should become for the fellow-passengers the rule of the continued journey. The invitation to join the festival of sharing is being given to us. But will I, will you, tune to these invitations? I wonder!" (p.19).

16. Godwin Rajinder Singh, *Gur Prasad: Sikh Doctrine of Divine Grace. An Interfaith Perspective,* Hong Kong – Osaka: Mission and Evangelism. The Christian Conference of Asia, 1992.

Grace of God is an important recurring theme in the Guru Granth, the sacred scripture of the Sikhs. The present work elucidates the concept divine grace in Sikh religion in the light of Guru Granth. The author, a committed Christian, has gone deep into the theology of grace and its implication in Sikh spirituality and daily life of the faithful. Besides the introduction and the conclusion, the other chapters of the work are: "Historical Antecedents", "In the Adi Granth", "In the Dasam Granth and Afterwards", and "The Singh Sabha Movement and Afterwards". The bibliography and glossary enhance the merit of the work.

17. Joseph Ladislaus, *The Quest for Spirituality in Herman Melville and Swami Vivekananda,* Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporations, 2001, pp.xvii+202. Rs. 315.oo. ISBN: 81-7086-271-X.

As the title indicates, this work is a comparative study of the spiritual theology and spiritual practices proposed and practiced by the American Herman Melville and Indian Swami Vivekananda. Herman Melville is a Calvinist Christian of Scottish descent born in the USA in 1819. He died in 1891. His completes works, including fiction, non-fiction and poetry, are published by Russel and Russel New York in sixteen volumes. He was a householder who reached the heights of spiritual life. Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), a Hindu by birth, a monk in choice, a neo-Vedantin in his philosophical views, was one of greatest leaders of India/Hinduism of the Renaissance period. The author sees striking parallels in the spiritual and cultural backgrounds, in the life, activities, world-views, mission and spiritual doctrines of these two great men on the nineteenth century. This is the revised edition of the doctoral dissertation of the author. The Foreword to the work is written bu E.James Reynold Daniel, Reader and Head of Scott Institute of English and foreign Languages, Nagercoil, India.

18. Françoise Fauconnet-Buzelin, MEP, *Mission unto Martyrdom. The Amazing Story of Nicolas Krick and Augustine Bourry. The First Martyrs of Arunachal Pradesh,* Shillong: Don Bosco Centre for Indigenous Cultures, 2001, pp.xiii+271. Rs.200.oo; US$ 20.oo.

From the back-cover of the book: "Since 1978, the tribal populations of Arunachal Pradesh, in the north-eastern corner of India, have been becoming Christians in spite of a law forbidding conversions. For mysterious reasons, this young Church claims the spiritual patronage of two French priests from the Paris Foreign Missions, Nicolas Krick and Augustine Bourry, assassinated in 1854 while crossing the country to enter Tibet.

Who were these men who have been almost forgotten in France? In what circumstances did they accomplish their mission? How did Christianity take root in this region more than a hundred years after their death? Why do these Christians claim a link between themselves and the two founding martyrs whom they would like to see canonized? Confronting these questions in this book will help to look at the deeper meaning of Christian mission, beyond its apparent results".

19. K.B. Sitaramayya, *The Marvel and the Mystery of Pain. A New Interpretation of the Book of Job,* Bangalore: M.C.C. Publications, 2001, pp.xiv+164. Rs.150.oo; US$ 12.oo.

The author, a Hindu professor of English literature, has done extensive studies in the Book of Job of the Old Testament. Using his inherited Hindu culture and spirituality as a background, he tries to give pain and suffering in the life of a seeker of perfection a new interpretation. He says in his preface to the work: "Job's suffering is seen not as 'innocent', 'unmerited' or otherwise, but as purposeful and creative, inflicted by the Lord deliberately with the specific object of evolving Job from one state of perfection to a far higher level." He sees striking parallels in the life of Arjuna, whose initial mental agony eventually leads him, guided by the divine Master, to the vision of the Lord's cosmic form. The book will definitely shed some light to the eternally discussed and debated issue of the problem of evil, problem of suffering, and God's love and justice.

20. Jean L. Mercier, *From Socrates to Wittgenstein. A Critical History of the Key-Concepts of Western Philosophy,* Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1998, pp.127. Rs.45.oo.

21. Jean L. Mercier, *Being Human,* Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation

22. Jean L. Mercier, *The Philosophy of the Absolute Reality. Theism, Atheism or Pantheism,* Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2000, pp.111. Rs.65.oo.

23. Jean L. Mercier, *Epistemology and the Problem of Truth,* Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2000, pp.85.

24. Jean L. Mercier, *Introduction to Philosophy. Glossary. Logic,* Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2000, pp.148.

25. Jean L. Mercier, *From the Upanishads to Aurobindo. A Critical History of the Key*-Concepts *of Indian Philosophy,* Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2002, pp.134. Rs.65.oo.

Jean L. Mercier, who has been teaching philosophy for more than forty years, publishes a series of short works on eastern and western philosophy entitled "Philosophy for All Series". These small books, as is evident, are not meant for scholars, but for ordinary people. They give basic concepts of philosophy, main systems of philosophy, and the fundamental teachings of great philosophers in uncomplicated and lucid language. As the author in his Foreword to the first volume speaks: "The non-initiated will find in these books an easy, attractive and pleasant introduction to the main problems raised by centuries of human pondering over the questions of ultimate concern. ... He must not be lost in the quagmire of petty philosophical issues, not seeing the wood for trees". These small works would definitely help to popularize philosophy among ordinary people.

26. Dr. Francis Fernandez, SDB and Dr. Jose Varickasseril, SDB (eds.), *Mission: A Service of Love. Essays in Honour of George Kottuppallil, OSB,* Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications, 1998, pp.viii+392. Rs.250.oo; US$ 20.oo. ISBN: 81-85408-00-22.

27. Dr. Sebastian Karotemprel, SDB, Dr. Joseph Puthenpurakal, SDB and Dr. Francis Fernandez, SDB (eds.), *Promoting Mission Studies. The Role of Missiological Institutes,* Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications, 2000, pp.xii+280. HB Rs.190.oo; US$ 20.oo. ISBN: 81-85408-00-28.

28. Dr. Francis Fernandez, SDB and Dr. Jose Varickasseril, SDB (eds.), *Be My Witnesses. Essays in Honour of Dr. Sebastian Karotemprel, SDB,* Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications, 2001, pp.xii+300. Rs.300.oo; US$ 25.oo. ISBN: 81-85408-00-29.

Three edited works on Christian mission published by the Vendrame Publications. Experts on Missiology from India and abroad deliberate on different aspects of the mission of the Church in the world. The book *Promoting Mission Studies* contains the papers presented in the international seminar on Missiological Institutes and Missiological Centres in Rome in February 1999.

29. James Kroeger, *Asia-Church in Mission: Exploring Ad Gentes Mission Initiatives of the Local Churches in Asia in the Vatican II Era,* Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1999, pp.viii+143. ISBN: 971-501-853-X.

This book 'explores those indigenous mission initiatives that have *Ad Gentes* evangelization as their primary charism. Additional significant mission responses are present in Asia, particularly among Asia's energetic and dedicated laity; religious women have emerged as an evangelizing force in Asia. Their stories deserve an appreciative narration and documentation though they exceed the scope of this work'. The three parts of the book are entitled: 'Mission Consciousness in Contemporary Asia', 'Mission and the Asian Synod', and 'Asian Realities and Perspectives'.

30. C.M. Millington, *Whether We be Many or Few. A History of the Cambridge/Delhi Brotherhood,* Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1999, pp.xvii+421.

'The Cambridge Brotherhood in Delhi' is a Christian missionary organization founded by Bishop Fosse Westcott in 1877 in Cambridge. This fraternity has its origin in the Anglican Church. There were some fraternities like this, started in England to help India. The SSJE (Cowley Fathers), the Oxford Brotherhood of the Epiphany, the Cawnpore Community, St. Peter's Brotherhood, etc. But all these Brotherhoods ceased to exist. The Rt. Revd. Lord Robert Runcie, former Archbishop of Canterbury, in his Foreword to the work says: "Of course the history of the Brotherhood is a window on the history of the Christian Church in North India. So many of its members have been formative in the creation of a united, liturgical and theologically articulate Church with a growing mission to the poor and underprivileged.

For any of the indicators of Mission – for example, Presence, Worship, Identification, Social Action, Dialogue and Unity – you could place a tick against the Brotherhood record; but still its special character would not have been encapsulated" (p.viii).

The author who has lived in India many decades gives an exhaustive history of the life and activities of this brotherhood in Delhi.

31. Thomas Manjaly, *Collaborative Ministry. An Exegetical and Theological Study of Synergos in Paul,* Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2001, pp.xxii+397. ISBN: 81-7086-265-5.

The present work is the revised edition of the doctoral thesis of the author. 'Synergy/synergos' means to bring together different forces and talents and work together for the intended goal of transformation. The author argues that St. Paul was not a 'solitary genius of the early Christian evangelizing movement'. He tried to bring together all the talents and charisms of his collaborators and followers to spread the message of Christ and to found new Churches. "Paul expressed his vision of collaborative ministry in different ways, though he has not given us a systematic presentation. ... His ways of presenting collaborative ministry could be grouped as follows: (i) images of the Church, (ii) the use of 'we' as a real plural, (iii) the teaching on charisms and ministries, and finally, (iv) the tittles and designations for associates in ministry." (p.1). The comprehensive bibliography (37 pages) would be of great help for researchers in this field. St. Paul's vision and practice of collaborative ministry of course, should inspire all to collaborate and cooperate with others in the work in God's kingdom.

32. Jacob C. Naluparayil, *The Identity of Jesus in Mark, An Essay on Narrative Christology*, (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Analecta 49), Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 2000, pp.xviii+636.

This massive work is the revised version of the doctoral dissertation of the author. Evidently this research work deals with the Christology, the doctrines about the person, nature, life and mission of Jesus Christ, according to the evangelist Mark. The book has six chapters in two parts. There had been numerous works on the Markan Christology. Though there is consensus on some important points, there are also serious differences of opinion among the authors on this theme. The present work is a comprehensive treatment of the theme. "At first, the author compares the Christology of the pre-Markan tradition as it appears in its two carriers, viz., pre-Markan collections and Q, with that of the parallel Markan passages. These comparisons enable him to have some preliminary indications on the prominent Christological trends of Mark. At the second stage, the author tries to answer the question of Jesus' identity by making use of narrative criticism as tool of analysis and consequently by concentrating on three narrative elements of Mark, viz., plot,

point of view, and characterization of Jesus. In the process, he succeeds in demonstrating that the designation "The Son of Man' stands for the identity of the divine person present in Jesus of Nazareth." Bibliography (66 pages), Index of main logia and pericopae discussed and index of authors enhance the merit of this research work.

33. Antony Kariyil, *Church and Society in Kerala. A Sociological Study,* New Delhi: Intercultural Publications, 1995, HB pp.xv+223. Rs200.oo. ISBN: 81-85574-13-8.

The book is a critical analysis of the Christian Churches and the society at large of Kerala in the light of the sociological theories of Max Weber. Weber recognizes the positive role religions play in the growth, development and functioning of societies. This book systematically and scientifically researches the involvement of the Churches in Kerala in the socio-cultural and political life of the Kerala society. Of the eight chapters of the work, the first and eighth chapters are dedicated to Weberian theories on the interaction of Church and Society and their contextualised application in the Kerala situation. The other six chapters deal with the various activities-educational, political, economic, social, etc., of the Kerala Churches for the well being and transformation of the Kerala society. Naturally this volume would be of great use for sociologists and students of the history of Christianity in Kerala.

34. Paulachan P. Kochappilly, cmi, *Evangelization as Celebration,* Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2002, pp.ix+167. Rs. 90.oo. ISBN: 81-86861-42-4.

The book contains four revised and re-edited articles the author had earlier published in journals. The four chapters of the book are: (i) "Celebration as Evangelization", (ii) "Theology of Evangelization of the St. Thomas Christians in the Context of Religious Pluralism", (iii) "Evangelization and Ethics", and (iv) "Healing through Religious Celebration: A Process of Evangelization through Sacramental Celebration". The basic thesis of the author is that liturgical and religious celebration is an effective medium for authentic, meaningful and effective work of evangelization. Conversely, the process of evangelization should be in tune with rhythm of celebration.

35. Luis M. Bermejo, SJ, *Abba, My Dad!*, Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 2001, pp.270. Rs.80.oo; US$ 8.oo. ISBN: 81-87886-46-3.

36. J.M. Heredero, SJ, *The Dead Rescue the Living. Spirit Possession in a Gujarat Christian Community,* Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 2001,

pp.220. Rs.100.oo; US$ 12.50. ISBN: 81-87886-45-5.

37. Gerald Coleman, SJ, *Walking with Inigo, A Commentary on the Autobiography of St. Ignatius,* Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 2001, pp.247. Rs.99.oo; US$ 12.oo. ISBN: 81-87886-40-4.

38. Pierre Jacob, SJ, *Ignatian Discernment. A Commentary of the Rules of Discernment and the Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola,* Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 2001, pp.xviii+246. Rs.105.oo; US$ 12.oo. ISBN: 81-87886-43-9.

39. Hedwig Lewis, SJ, *Happiness Manufacturers: Spiritual Challenges for Youth,* Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 2001, pp.228. Rs.60.oo; US$ 7.oo. ISBN: 81-87886-41-2.

40. C. Drago, *Shattered Minds, and Do-Re-Mi-Fa,* Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 2001, pp.166. Rs.82.oo; US$ 9.oo. ISBN: 81-87886-42-0.

41. Fr. Antony Elevamkudy, *Bible:Its Historicy and Our Salvation,* Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2000, pp.xvi+468. ISBN: 81-7086-261-2.

42. Antony Mookenthottam, msfs, *Religious Community. From Divine Self-gift to Communities of True Friends,* Bangalore: SFS Publications and Asian Trading Corporation, 2001, pp.70. Rs.65.oo. ISBN: 81-85376-63-8.

43. James Dudley Perea, OMI, *Mary in the Bible & in the Tradition of the Church,* Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2000, pp.vi+115. ISBN: 81-7086-259-0.

44. James H. Kroeger, MM (ed.), *Telling God's Story. National Mission Congress 2000. Resources and Documents,* Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2001, pp.viii+139.

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